

the chronicle

Wolves legend adds his weight to charity fundraiser's quest

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Arson attack on pub leaves owner with a £50,000 bill

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Fans to set up new club as Yeltz in cash crisis

A SUPPORTERS' GROUP is preparing to form a new football club should Halesowen Town go to the wall.

The immediate future of the Yeltz, formed in 1873, became uncertain last week when their primary benefactor, Godfrey Ingram, withdrew his support.

His brother Graham, current chairman of Halesowen, issued a statement on Tuesday warning that the club could be forced to cease trading should no new investors or sponsors come forward within five days.

Godfrey departed The Grove citing a lack of media support.

Without Godfrey's backing, which Graham called a "devastating" loss in business terms, the club faces the prospect of liquidation.

Expected

But Gary Willetts, who runs the Yeltz Trust, said the news would be welcomed by many Halesowen fans who feel that they have no association with the current club after three troubled years.

"To be honest it's not a surprise to us, we've expected this for quite some time," Mr Willetts said.

"I fully expect them to wind the club up – there's been next to no commercial activity since the Ingrams took over and I find it unlikely that they can secure funding in five days."

"This is why we set up the Yeltz Trust as a safety net for as and when this might happen."

"There are plenty of examples of phoenix clubs and that would be the route we'd take to ensure senior football would continue in Halesowen."

Mr Willetts added that if Halesowen Town ceased to exist then any potential new club would have to be community based.

"Most people don't see this club as Halesowen Town anymore."

Difficult

"I would think the majority of supporters would welcome a new club being formed as long as it was in the hub of the community," he said.

Anyone who wants to get involved in the Yeltz Trust should contact Gary by emailing garyhtsatravel@yahoo.co.uk

In his statement this week the club chairman said: "In the absence of new benefactors or commercial sponsors to support the club through this difficult time, I may be left with no alternative other than to cease trading very shortly and effectively wind up the football club."

Halesowen is believed to be one of the oldest football clubs in the country, having formed 138 years ago. Their most successful period came in the 1980s when they won consecutive FA Vase trophies at Wembley and regularly reached the FA Cup first round.

Support grows for return of day care service



Olive Perry and daughter Paulette Walton with, right, Carole Jenkins and Tony Billingham and councillors Barbara Price, Chris Tranter and Iris Boucher

ELDERLY residents and their families turned up to a public meeting in the hope their Black Country day care service could be resurrected at its landmark venue.

Seven weeks ago Sandwell social services moved the day care service at The Regis in Reddall Hill Road by owners Carole Jenkins and Tony Billingham.

The business partners also run nursing and care homes business Carlton Care Group, which operates in the Sandwell and Dudley boroughs.

Currently the bosses are assessing whether there is enough demand to run

the Old Hill centre as a private enterprise.

Addressing the meeting, Mrs Jenkins said: "The local authority came to us three years ago because there was a great need for day care for the elderly. If there was a great need three years ago, there is an even greater need now."

"We want to offer the day care here, but it does need to be funded."

"To make it work we have to have between 35 and 40 people here a day."

Devastated

Olive Perry, aged 88, of Hadendale Road, Cradley Heath, went to the care centre at The Regis once a week and at the meeting she said she misses it terribly.

She said: "I loved it here, it was a real social occasion, all my friends would come."

"I used to come with my husband before he passed away. I was devastated when it moved."

Mrs Perry said she was originally not

going to continue going when it moved to West Bromwich, but was persuaded by her daughter Paulette Walton to give it a try.

She said: "I spend three hours on a coach a day when I go. People from all over go there, but many of my friends decided it was too far so don't go. It is not as nice as it was here."

Sue Parkes went to the meeting on behalf of her 80-year-old mother. She said: "Mum would come here and get her hair and nails done and sit and chat with friends. When she came here she was a completely different person, she was enjoying life again."

"I am now terrified she will deteriorate. It is really very upsetting. She doesn't want to spend hours on a bus to West Bromwich."

Another public meeting was arranged for Wednesday, March 23 at 2.30pm to establish whether there is enough interest.

CHAOS AS £22m CUTS APPROVED

● Police called ● Gallery uproar ● Demo on steps

POLICE were called to a Dudley Council meeting which descended into chaos as tensions ran high over plans to axe £22 million from the borough's finances.

Officers were called in to the budget-setting meeting on Monday after members of the public began throwing paper planes and chanting during the debate.

The Mayor of Dudley, Councillor Peter Miller, was forced to halt proceedings for 30 minutes while officers calmed the situation.

Inspector Richard Jones, who attended the scene, told the gallery: "It is your democratic right to sit and listen to the discussions here tonight. But for the meeting to continue, there needs to be no chanting and clapping from the public. The mayor has the right to hold the meeting in private if members of the public are being disruptive."

Eventually, more than half of the people in the gallery – which

Shadow finance chief warns of more than 1,000 job losses

MORE than 1,000 people could find themselves out of a job when the full impact of Dudley Council's £35 million budget cuts are revealed, opposition councillors claimed.

As part of the heated debate in the chamber, shadow cabinet member for finance Councillor Pete Lowe said: "There will be 429 full-time equivalent jobs going this year, rising to 828 full-time equivalent jobs to go within a three-year period," he told the meeting.

"But what we should not forget is that the majority of Dudley Council employees are part time workers. This means, by my calculations, that the full impact of job cuts could be in excess of 1,000."

included members of the National Unions of Teachers and the Dudley Coalition Against the Cuts group – chose to leave rather than stay in silence.

Tensions were running high even before the meeting, when it emerged there were only 45 seats available in the public gallery and entry was by ticket only. They were handed out 'first come, first served' forcing dozens more protesters out.

Proceedings were called to a halt

after Councillor Miller had called for quiet twice and people in the gallery starting chanting: "No ifs, no buts, no to Tory cuts".

The budget, which sets out plans to save £22m during the 2011/12 financial year, was approved following more than three hours of debate at Dudley Council house.

Cuts totalling £35 million are to be made over three years.

New cuts which came to light include almost £500,000 to be axed

from the Dudley Performing Arts group. The cuts mean major events – including Rock the Castle and the annual Summer Festival – will no longer be able to be held.

Other moves include cutting £569,000 from family centres in Stourbridge, Coseley and Gornal, and merging them with nearby children's centres, and axing £650,000 for children with mental and physical disabilities.

Before the meeting began more than 150 people carrying flags and banners gathered outside Dudley Council house to protest, against what they labelled "brutal" cuts.

Among the protesters – many wearing Dudley Council uniforms – were workers fearing for their jobs, members of unions such as Unison, Unite and NUT, and campaign group Dudley Coalition Against The Cuts. Laura Gibbard, from the Dudley Coalition Against The Cuts, said: "Cuts to local services – particularly those which are going to affect the most vulnerable people in society – are just not acceptable," she said.



Helena Lawson from Unison and other protesters outside the budget meeting at Dudley Council House, Priory Road, Dudley

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Last three care homes face review by council

THE long-term future of the three remaining council-run residential care homes in Dudley will be reviewed within two years, the authority said.

Council leaders have revealed that they are considering the fate of 31-bed New Bradley Hall, in Kingswinford, 32-bed Russells Court, in Dudley, and 41-bed Shensstone, in Halesowen, as part of a review of social care in the wake of Government cuts.

They are the last three council-run long-stay care homes after it was announced last year that Tiled House Care Home, Pen-snett, and Amblecote House would be shut.

The Tory cabinet member for adult and community services, Councillor Lesley Faulkner, said: "It's important to emphasise that no decision has been taken at this stage to close the remaining three long-stay residential care homes in the borough - New Bradley Hall, Russells Court or Shensstone."

"Proposals to consider the future of long-stay care homes in the borough will take place over the next two years as part of the council's modernisation of social services."

Councillor Faulkner said that social care for older people in Dudley was changing.

"Many older people have told the council that they want to maintain their health and independence for as long as possible and this is the focus of Dudley's new vision for social care," she said.

"It means the council is modernising its approach and looking at positive alternative options."

Apartments

"One of the options, extra care housing, is designed to offer independent living for older people and is a positive alternative to what many would consider as traditional social care services such as residential care."

The authority is ploughing ahead with plans for five extra care housing schemes which will provide around 600 flats to help meet the needs of older people.

Work has already started on two schemes at Russells Hall and Coseley.

The £16 million Russells Hall scheme will have 132 apartments and will be aimed at the over 55s, while the Coseley scheme is an £8m project and will comprise 72 apartments.

Delay in repairs to rock face

WORK to repair a rock face at risk of collapse along an historic Dudley canal will begin two months later than first expected. Council chiefs sanctioned repair work costing £350,000 in the Dudley Canal Tunnel and Limestone Mines to prevent a landslide at Castle Mill Basin, off Birmingham New Road, in October. Originally it had been hoped workers would be before the end of January but the design work has been taking longer than expected.

Final chance for mother who stole

A MOTHER-OF-THREE has been given a suspended jail sentence after admitting stealing four computer games from a store.

Dudley magistrates told recovering drug addict Chloe Vigar, aged 24, of Watsons Close, Kates Hill, she was being given a "final chance".

She admitted taking the games, worth £79.79, from HMV in Dudley's Merry Hill Centre six days after being

given a 12-month community order for a separate crime.

Vigar was also on bail for another theft, Miss Maxine Jarrouse, prosecuting, said. Miss Ruth Pathan, defending, said Vigar had been forced into the theft to repay a £40 debt.

She was given a 16-week sentence suspended for 12 months, 12 months supervision and drug rehabilitation for the same period.

Lovelle wins as shop celebrates



YMCA fundraising manager Steve Bavington, back left, mayor and mayoress Peter and Hilary Miller, and YMCA centre manager Wendy Bennett with, front, contestants Amy Taylor, Anthony Slater, and the winner, Lovelle Foster

STAFF and shoppers at a charity shop in Brierley Hill have hit a high note to celebrate their first year in operation.

The YMCA shop at the Moor Centre opened on March 2 last year. Since then there have been more than 100 young people through the doors volunteering and helping on work placements.

To mark the birthday staff held a talent contest with seven current staff and volunteers.

The judges, who included Dudley Mayor Peter Miller and Steve Bavington, from the YMCA, West Bromwich, picked 20-year-old Lovelle Foster of Stourbridge as the winner.

She performed a Rihanna song and gained a certificate signed by the mayor. Shop manager Julie Vaughan said: "Our first year has been brilliant."

"We have had around 100 young people working with us over the year on various placements and the people of Dudley have been very good to us."

Flooded library's opening chapter

A LIBRARY closed indefinitely following flood damage is to reopen at the end of next month.

Heating and electrics at Blackheath Library were damaged after an outside sewer pipe burst during the December freeze and flooded the cellar.

A mobile library service was set up while repair works took place.

The closure follows that of nearby Valley Road Express Library, which flooded in July as firefighters tackled a blaze in a nearby flat. It reopened after three months after it was fully repaired and dried out.

The new £1.9 million Blackheath Library currently under construction, will not open until at least May.

The library is set to transform the landscape of the town and will also be home to new offices for the Black Country Housing Group.

Councillor Ann Shackleton, Sandwell's cabinet member for youth, culture and leisure said: "Work on the library is well under way and hopefully it can be reopened late next month."

"There is still no date set for the opening of the new library, but it is hoped to take place in May."

"Once that is done the old library building will be put up for sale. We have said that whoever buys it must keep the original appearance of the building."

All libraries in Sandwell are currently under review,

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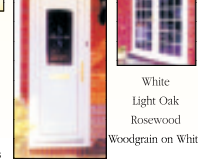
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Cry goes up for younger voices

BUDDING singers in Cradley Heath are being given the chance to showcase their talents in a youth choir.

Pure Harmony has been taken over by a new leader, Eleanor Rushbury, who is now looking for fresh talent to join the group.

The choir, which meets every Monday from 6pm until 7pm, at Lawrence Lane Methodist Church, has been running for more than three years.

Singing regularly at charity events and at concerts throughout the year, the choir is affiliated to the adult group Voices in Harmony, which is well known throughout the area for its fundraising efforts.

Eager

The youth choir, which currently has 18 members, is looking for boys and girls aged between six and 16 to join their new conductor.

Eleanor, who teaches in Sandwell, has qualified as a choral conductor through the Sing for Pleasure choral conducting programme.

She said: "I wanted to be able to use my conducting skills within the community. We perform all sorts of music and I am eager to get the children together to share their love for singing."

"It would be great if the youngsters that join do so with a view to carry on and eventually perform as part of the adult choir."

For more information, log on to www.vihchoir.org or call 01384 567207.

Birth unit turning away mums from out of town

MOTHERS-TO-BE are being turned away from Dudley's Russells Hall Hospital because midwives cannot cope with demand.

Russells Hall Hospital has told GPs that it will start to limit the number of applications from women who want to have their babies there as staff are already under too much pressure.

Hospital bosses said there had been an increase in the number of women applying because of the department's fine reputation.

They expect to turn away 200 people from outside Dudley over the course of the year.

Chief executive Paula Clark apologised to any mother who had been disappointed.

One man, whose wife is 10 weeks pregnant with their third child, said he found the decision ludicrous.

"We requested Russells Hall as we had our other two children there and we know it's good," said the 33-year-old, from Coseley.

"But our midwife said they were not allowing any more referrals and told us we should complain. She thought it was ludicrous too."

The couple have been forced to apply to Wolverhampton's New Cross Hospital, which is much further from the father's workplace in Brierley Hill.

He added: "What really annoys me is last year the NHS was singing about people choosing where they are treated."

Mrs Clark said neighbouring trusts, including Wolverhampton and Sandwell, had been informed of the decision.

She added: "We have limited space in terms of delivery rooms and are reaching our capacity."

"Our first obligation is to continue providing a safe high quality service to our patients and by limiting the geographical area from which we draw referrals we believe we can do this."

NHS Dudley said Dudley Primary Care Trust was now reviewing services.

Cash tonic for Mind group's self-help work

A MENTAL health charity has received a welcome boost from Dudley Primary Care Trust.

Dudley Mind has been given an initial grant of £1,000 to create and support self-help groups aimed at people with common mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety.

The money means the initiative will now be able to get under way immediately in Dudley, Stourbridge and Halesowen.

Martin Mueller, chief executive of Dudley Mind, said: "Past experience

shows how helpful these groups can be, as members offer each other mutual support, exchange ways of coping, and realise that they are not alone in their feelings."

The groups will be steered by its members and by their needs.

They will receive training, help, advice and support from Dudley Mind staff.

The charity aims to promote good mental health and support those with mental health problems, and the group will aim to encourage people to be more independent.

Land on market

LAND in Cradley Heath and Rowley Regis is being auctioned. The guide price of a 0.27-acre plot off Allbut Street, Cradley Heath, is £75,000 and a 3.3-acre site near Bury Hill Park, in Rowley Regis, has a guide price of £13,000. The auction is at Villa Park at 11am on Friday.

First step towards £30m college



Director of learning Bob Chapman, director of estates Steve Johnson, architect Nick Allen, front, construction manager Martin Fahy, college principal Lowell Williams, and the senior project manager Patrick Homer at the new site

THE first spades of soil have been turned at the site of Dudley College's new multi-million-pound vocational centre.

A former fire station in Tower Street is being transformed as part of a £30m town centre campus development.

College principal Lowell Williams joined staff from Birmingham building contractor ISG and architectural engineering firm Pick Everard to celebrate the start of construction work.

Tourism

Mr Williams said the project was "testament" to the hard work of staff in bringing the scheme to fruition.

The town's old fire station has been cleared, but the historic facade is being retained in the design.

Work on the vocational centre, which will provide training in sport, tourism, public services, beauty and arts, is anticipated to take around 18 months.

The college is now working on revised plans for its sixth form centre.

Couple allowed their dog to suffer

THE owners of a Japanese Akita dog which was underweight and suffering from a skin condition failed to take it to the vets, a court heard.

Kimberley Butcher and Joseph O'Conner said they thought their pet, Tara, was getting better and did not need expert help, Dudley Magistrates' Court was told.

RSPCA inspectors, who visited the couple's home in Jasmine Road, Dudley, said the animal had also not been fed enough food and weighed less than it should.

The pair, both aged 22, were banned from keeping animals for 10 years and ordered to do 200 hours of unpaid work. They were jointly charged with two counts of causing the animal unnecessary suffering and pleaded guilty to the charges last week.

Mr Nick Sutton, prosecuting on behalf of the RSPCA, said inspectors visited on June 1 last year and found the dogs - Tara and a German shepherd, King.

Tara was said to be "hungry to the point of being ravenous". The dog has since been re-homed, he said.

Mr Richard Birch, defending, said Miss Butcher had been pregnant and they had made the baby their priority as there had been complications with the pregnancy.

The pair were ordered to pay £200 court and vet costs. King will also be re-homed.

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thechronicle

Bully case firm wins new date

A WORKER awaiting compensation after winning a bullying case against a Black Country care home has now been told the verdict is to be reviewed.

Joanne Hayward had won her claims for constructive unfair dismissal and disability discrimination against Pepperhall Ltd, which runs Valley Court care home, in Valley Road, Cradley Heath.

But Pepperhall successfully applied to Birmingham Employment Tribunal to have the case heard again. Miss Hayward, of Moor Street, Brierley Hill, alleged at the tribunal hearing that she had resigned because of bullying.

The firm did not oppose this as it had not responded to tribunal deadlines.

But area manager Sandeep Dhani said the firm denied Miss Hayward had been bullied and tribunal judge Mrs Pam Hughes said the case should be heard again.

Blind 'buddy' scheme given £300,000 boost

Wolves legend gives fund a lift

FORMER Wolves star Steve Bull is backing a Dudley father-of-two in his quest to raise the bar for a record-breaking charity challenge.

Weightlifter and Beacon Centre for the Blind trustee James Fernihough is attempting an endurance world record, lifting the equivalent of 250 tons in 24 hours.

James, from Blossomfield Close, Kingswinford, hopes to bring in thousands of pounds for the Sedgley-based charity.

His challenge will be staged on March 16 at Paragon Gym, off Stallings Lane, Kingswinford, starting at 9am.

Now the 37-year-old has scored the support of the former striker through his employers, technology supply firm Altdigital which sponsor The Steve Bull Foundation.

Bully helped organise a charity auction and took part in a Q&A session at Kingswinford Snooker Club, off Stallings Lane. More than 80 people attended.



Steve Bull and weightlifter James Fernihough who organised the charity auction with supporter Daniel Bolus

A "BUDDY" scheme for people suffering with the loss of sight in Dudley has been extended for another five years, thanks to a £300,000 grant.

The Thomas Pocklington Trust's Stourbridge centre, is based at the Mary Stevens Centre in Hagley Road.

It has been running a pilot scheme for people in Dudley and North Worcestershire where volunteers are paired with people who are partially sighted or blind, since 2009.

The lottery grant will also help the charity expand its befriending programme to more people, and will be able to offer a wider range of activities for them to get involved in.

Chief executive Peter Corbett said staff and volunteers were all "delighted".

"This is wonderful news," he added. "The scheme gives support to people with sight loss in their own homes, preserving their independence and quality of life."

Recruiting

"With this grant we can now expand the scheme and run it for five years."

The money will be spent recruiting and training volunteers, who are then matched up with someone suffering from sight loss. They then visit their "partner" and help them with tasks such as reading their mail and doing their shopping, as well as keeping them company and accompanying them on social days out.

Mr Corbett said: "The scheme helps to reduce isolation for people with sight loss who may live alone or receive limited support."

He said the scheme was also used to provide respite for full-time carers.

For more information on volunteering call 01384 441222.

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Pas 23/24

Des is facing up to losing prize beard



Des Weaver and his wife, Eunice, who is happy his beard will soon be cut off to raise money for Birmingham Children's Hospital and the British Lung Foundation

HE HAS been growing it for more than 14 months.

However, in a few weeks' time Des Weaver, from Cradley Heath, will be shaving his precious beard off for two good causes.

The grandfather, a retired electrician, is trying to raise money for Birmingham Children's Hospital and the British Lung Foundation.

He aims to cut the beard, which is about 10in long, when he turns 69 on March 22.

"I have had so much fun growing it," he said.

"People stop me in the street and say 'goodness gracious it must have taken years to have grown that'. They can't believe it's taken just 14 months.

"I look pretty gruesome because I have let my hair grow as well. People say I look like Uncle Albert from Only Fools and Horses."

Offered

Mr Weaver, a father-of-four from The Mount, started to grow the beard last January and decided that it would be a good way to make some money for charity after a friend offered him money to get rid of it.

"I got up on New Year's Day and I thought 'no' I am not having a shave today," he said. "And it just went from there."

"Adrian Chiles was growing a beard for his New Year's resolution and I thought if he is going to do it, I will as well."

"He got rid of his a few weeks later but I am still going strong - for now at least."

Anyone who wishes to make a donation is urged to call 0121 559 3396.

Schools say No to one in ten children

AROUND one in 10 children in Dudley will miss out on their first choice secondary school this year.

Hundreds of thousands of children in the country have discovered which school they have been allocated for this September as part of National Offers Day.

Across the borough around 391 students missed out on a place at their first-choice school this September (2011), with 88 per cent submitting successful applications out of a total of 3,262 students.

The percentage of successful applications was down on last year.

Around 90 per cent of children were offered their first choice school last September out of 3,394.

In Sandwell, 1,010 missed out on their first choice school, with 73 per cent submitting successful applications. Around 3,741 youngsters applied in total.

Last year, 72 per cent of youngsters in the borough got their first choice of secondary school.

Talk on heroes

MAX Keen will be speaking on The Anglo Zulu War of 1879 at Stourbridge Historical Society. His talk on March 17 will feature the stories of two heroes from Kingswinford and Brierley Hill who both won the Victoria Cross. It takes place at 7.30pm in the Ambleside Room of Stourbridge Town Hall.

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Singer Cecil hits 90th birthday note

A STOURBRIDGE pensioner's noteworthy singing career is to be honoured with a concert by leading musicians to celebrate his 90th birthday.

Retired headteacher Cecil Drew, of High Park Avenue, Wollaston, is well known in choral and church groups in the West Midlands for his fine bass baritone voice, and he was in demand as a soloist for decades.

Mr Drew is an honorary fellow of Birmingham Conservatoire, where he founded an annual singing contest named after him. The Cecil Drew Oratorio Prize was won by Welsh singer Rhydian soon after he became famous as runner-up in the X Factor in 2007.

His wife of 56 years, Barbara Drew, 82, said: "Rhydian sang It is Enough from Mendelssohn's oratorio Elijah – and it was so beautiful it made adults cry."

Teaching

Mr Drew used to sing at Bethel Chapel in Lye – performing in Stainer's Crucifixion every year. He took a correspondence course to become a licentiate of Trinity College London.

He was a teacher at Giggill Primary School, Stourbridge, and later became headteacher at Clifton-upon-Teme Primary School in Worcestershire.

Mrs Drew said her husband also used to do some private singing teaching – but gave up "because all they wanted was to sing like Simon Le Bon".

The concert in honour of Mr Drew's 90th birthday – featuring pianists Philip Martin, of Birmingham Conservatoire, David Quigley, an Irish conductor and composer, and Mark Bebbington, a professional musician from



Best baritone – Cecil Drew proudly showing his musical award from 1943 and, inset, Cecil when he was a young man

Hagley – is at Wollaston's St James's Church on April 5.

Mr Drew said: "I'm very happy about the concert plan."

"I would like to be able to sing there but I will have to see how I am then."



Night out ended in fighting

A THUG who kicked two men in the head after birthday celebrations turned into a brawl in Stourbridge has been jailed for eight months.

Paul Clarke was among two groups caught on CCTV fighting in High Street in the early hours of October 28, Wolverhampton Crown Court was told.

Clarke, aged 38, from Cole Green, Shirley, kicked a man twice in the head after launching a similar attack on another victim. He also hit a man in the fight.

Clarke, who had been on a night out to celebrate a friend's birthday, walked off but was arrested soon afterwards. He was the only person involved to face courts, it was revealed.

Clarke, who had previous convictions, admitted affray and was jailed for eight months.

Jazz session swings along

SUNDAY afternoons can swing along gently in Stourbridge with some jazz. Bobby Johnson's Jentle Jazz five-piece is on the move with a new venue for the date on Sunday (March 13).

The swing and easy listening jazz session, from 1pm to 3.30pm, will be at Stourbridge FC's Ambleside ground. "I'm just trying to promote my kind of music in Stourbridge," said trombonist and sax player Johnson.

The session could become a regular event if well supported. Admission is £4.



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Artistic contest on road safety

YOUNG artists from Halesowen are being encouraged to stop, look and listen for a school art competition.

Pupils are being urged to get involved with the competition, set up by Scrivens Opticians and The Hearing Company, which teaches children about the importance of using their eyes and ears when walking close to, or crossing, a road.

Entrants are required to submit a colourful poster illustrating what they

have learned about the stop, look and listen rule, to be in with the chance of winning £50 worth of book tokens for their school, and a £50 Scrivens Opticians voucher.

The winner will be announced in May to coincide with National Walk to School Week. Any school wishing to take part in the competition can email emmav@willoughby-pr.co.uk for an entry pack. All designs must be submitted by next Friday, March 17.

Bosses meet to discuss growth

BUSINESS leaders gathered in Cradley Heath to discuss how to boost the sector in times of hardship.

Black Country and Sandwell chambers of commerce, together with representatives from local firms Runflat International, Hadley Group, NDC Polythene and George Green LLP, met MP James Morris at Westley Plastics, Cradley Heath.

Despite its recent decline, manufacturing remains a key industry in the Black Country, but the 2009 figure of 69,000 manufacturing employees is just half the number of ten years ago.

Innovative

Manufacturing's share of total jobs in the area fell from 29.5 per cent to 16 per cent.

Mr Morris, Tory MP for Halesowen and Rowley Regis, said: "Manufacturing provides many jobs for local people in and around Halesowen and Rowley Regis."

"We must proactively support this industry so we can build on our industrial heritage to develop the manufacturing businesses of the future, creating the jobs and economic growth we need."

A number of issues were discussed at the meeting as to how the industry can be assisted, including innovative ways of increasing the number of apprentices and improving the skills of workers.

Fire-hit publican faces £50,000 bill

THE landlord of a Dudley pub damaged in an arson attack faces a £50,000 bill to get back in business.

The bar area at the Hope Tavern, in Cinder Bank, Netherton, was badly burned and it could be closed for up to a month.

Landlord Dimmy Sangha says he will give a reward to anyone who provides information that leads to the conviction of the culprits.

Arsonists broke a window and threw a burning object into the bar at around 3am on Tuesday of last week.

Mr Sangha believes the attack was fuelled by "jealousy", but the 39-year-old said he is "determined to bounce back".

Automatic

The pub reopened in December 2009 after a major refurbishment. Mr Sangha bought it from Wolverhampton-based Marston's brewery after it had been shut for three years.

He believes up to £50,000 will need to be spent on the bar area, which must be gutted and re-decorated.

Mr Sangha said: "It is heart wrenching to see what has happened to my pub after we put so much effort in."

"Everything inside was new - we've built up a good business here and it seems like someone was jealous of that."

Mr Sangha, who has four chil-



Owner Dimmy Sangha surveys the damage at the Hope Tavern

dren ranging from a two-month old baby to a 15-year-old son, was alerted at his Dudley home in the early hours by a phone call from the firm that runs the automatic fire alarm at the pub.

"I was devastated, I could not believe what I was seeing."

When he arrived, two fire crews

from Cradley Heath were tackling the flames.

Thousand of pounds in trade will be lost while the pub is closed.

Mr Sangha hopes to re-open in a fortnight, but it could be longer.

Anyone with information about the fire is urged to call West Midlands Police on 0345 113 5000.

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Jail for needle-threat man on shoplift spree

Puzzling how to save church

A BOOK of Black Country brainteasers has been launched to test residents' knowledge, and raise funds for the restoration of a Dudley church.

St John's Church Preservation Group hopes the book will bring in £1,000 for the historic place of worship in Kates Hill. Volunteers launched it was by at their stall in Dudley Market, with copies selling at 50p each. More than 100 copies were sold during the day.

The group hopes firm will sell the puzzle book, which has been compiled by Chris and Gail Smith, of community magazine Village Voice.

It has been backed by businesses in the community.

The group has been battling to save the church, which closed in 2002 due to safety fears, and this year celebrated the first phase of restoration work getting underway.

Trust chairman Deb Brownlee said: "This collaboration of businesses and the magazine shows the strength of feeling about saving the church."

"St John's can be saved and it's local people and businesses who will do it".



Deb Brownlee tests her local knowledge with help from Michael Amor-Wilkes, Chris Smith who compiled the Brainteasers book, and Tony Timmins

A PROLIFIC thief who held a needle to the neck of a teenage Black Country supermarket worker and threatened to stab him has been sentenced to 48 weeks in prison.

Andrew Rose held the hypodermic needle 6in away from the neck of 17-year-old store assistant David Clift at Blackheath's Iceland, after pulling the protective tip off with his mouth, Warley Magistrates' Court heard.

The 24-year-old threatened to stab Mr Clift if he tried to stop him stealing five packets of bacon from the store.

He also threatened a female security worker at Sainsbury's, Blackheath, with a needle and bit a worker at Wilkinson, Blackheath, who tried to chase him.

Rose confronted the Sainsbury's worker after she chased him from the store for taking a bottle of Baileys liqueur.

The Wilkinson worker was bitten as he tried to stop Rose stealing Nivea gift sets.

Rose pleaded guilty earlier this month to three counts of theft from a shop and two counts of common assault.

'Horrific'

Appearing at court last week, he pleaded guilty to a further eight thefts and another common assault, to include the biting in Wilkinson on December 4.

Miss Kelly Hales, prosecuting, said the extra charges showed Rose went on a "shoplifting spree" from November 22 to December 4. She said: "He assaulted a number of staff at the locations, the offences were particularly horrific when you consider he threatened people with a hypodermic needle."

The spree included six hits on Co-op, Manor Lane, Halesowen, where he stole 13 bottles of whisky worth £241.34 and meat worth £76.89. There were two further thefts from Wilkinson, Blackheath, the court heard.

Mr Parns Hayre, defending, said the spree came after Rose's brother and grandmother died and his mother was injured by a car.

Passing sentence, chairman of the bench Mrs Karen Chater said she had taken Rose's early guilty plea into consideration. He received two consecutive jail terms of 24 weeks and two concurrent ones.

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thechronicle

COMPETITION

Snap up vouchers for your favourite all-purpose store

TO celebrate today's grand re-opening of its Halesowen store, situated on Hagley Street, Wilkinsons is offering 20 lucky Chronicle readers the chance to win £25 worth of vouchers to spend on products in its half-price homewares sale.

Ewan Chapman, warden of The Leasowes, was cutting the ceremonial ribbon at 9am alongside representatives and children from Halesowen CofE Primary School whose colourful spring themed posters, specifically created for the day, were being put on display.

During the re-opening celebrations, representatives from The Leasowes will be setting up a 'Garden and Wildlife Station' in the Get Growing aisles, offering advice to customers looking to buy gardening products and equipment.

Staff will hand out sweets and balloons throughout the day, and a volunteer from Wilkinsons' charity of the year, Anthony Nolan, is hosting a raffle where customers have the chance of winning spring clean and garden products, including flower



WIN!

seeds, gardening gloves and dusters.

The fun will continue on Saturday (March 12), when Halesowen's very own Champion Scout Band will be performing, entertaining shoppers with their competition winning music. Halesowen College's Beauty Academy will also be in store with a Pampering Pod.

Free manicures, make-up advice and tips will be on offer to all mothers and daughters looking to treat themselves ahead of Mothering Sunday.

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quality, low-priced everyday products, including health and beauty, cleaning, pet care, confectionery, food and snacks, DIY and paint, tools and electrics, toys, gardening equipment, homewares, furniture and lights, kitchen and bath, textiles, sta-

tionery and books, Wilkinsons in Halesowen will remain the local, trusted high street retailer it always has been.

Still a family owned firm after 80 years of trading Wilkinsons, the home and garden retailer, has 349 stores across the UK, selling over 25,000 product lines.

Wilkinsons is committed to Britain's high streets and is an active supporter of local charities, community groups and care organisations.

To see what other fantastic offers are available - log on to www.wilkinsonplus.com

To enter the competition, simply answer the following question:

What is the name of the street on which the store is situated?

- Hagley Street
- Bagley Street
- Wagley Road

Send your answer to: Wilkinsons competition (editorial), Chronicle Series, 51-53 Queen Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES with your name and address on the back.

Closing date for entries is Friday, March 18.

Winners will be picked at random and notified by Wilkinsons.

One entry per person; vouchers cannot be exchanged for cash. Usual competition rules apply and the editor's decision is final.

thechronicle

Theatre puts on classic TV play

OLDBURY Repertory Theatre is staging a version of the BBC-aired play *Abigail's Party*, written by cult director Mike Leigh.

The originally improvised play, which is a satire on middle-class suburbia of the 70s, will be performed for a week from Monday, starting at 7.30pm.

The play, set in Romford, Essex explores a party held by Beverly and her husband Laurence, to entertain neighbours Susan, Tony



Beverly, played by Kaz Luckin, left, finds her husband Laurence (Rob Hyland), left, is not in a party mood as neighbours, from left, Angela (Helen Spragg) Tony (Tim Ward) and Susan (Liz Robinson) look

and Angela. The small talk soon creates a rising tension which snaps with dramatic consequences.

The show was originally opened in April 1977 and ran for 104 performances at London's Hampstead Theatre, before being

broadcast as part of the BBC series *Play for Today* in 1977.

Tickets are available by phone on 0121 552 2761 or in person from the box office, on Monday evenings, the Friday March 11 from 7.30pm, and every night of the production from 7pm.

Exhibition steams in

A HOST of model railway tracks and trains will be on display for an annual event in the Black Country.

Stourbridge Railway Society will be holding its Model Railway Exhibition at the Bonded Warehouse, in Canal Street, Stourbridge, over the weekend of April 9 and 10.

Attractions will include model railway layouts covering all gauges together with trade stands and demonstrations. The exhibition will be open between 10am and 5pm on both days. Entrance is £2.50 for adults and children.

Spring in to Mozart

A BLACK Country orchestra will devote its spring concert to the works of Mozart performing four of his best known pieces.

Halesowen Orchestra will stage the event on April 9 at the town's Cornbow Hall and tickets are available.

The programme includes the composer's *La Clemenza di Tito*. Tickets for the concert are priced £7 and can be bought on the door or by calling 0121 550 0956.

Firms given alarm offer

MEMBERS of Dudley's business crime partnership can now benefit from a free key holder service to help keep their premises secure.

If an alarm is raised Business Protection Services will attend to ensure the building is secure. Businesses can call 01384 813191 to join.

UP TO 6,000 commuters a day are using an illegal rat-run through a Dudley side street which could now be blocked off in an attempt to resolve the problem for good.

People living in Blackacre Road have been complaining to police and the council for years.

Council banned drivers from the road except to access homes in 2002 but motorists have been flouting the traffic order.

A police crackdown helped cut numbers but recent surveys suggest up to 6,000 drivers a day are cutting through the street to the town centre.

Now council chiefs have drawn up a range of options to try

totackle the issue. These include blocking off the road between Shedden Street and Dando Road and making nearby Paradise one-way although residents are thought to be against that idea.

Other proposals being put forward by the council include making Blackacre Road one way towards Bean Road and making a section of Shedden Street one way towards Lloyd Street.

Discussed

Making Blackacre Road one way towards Dando Road has also been suggested as has making a section of Blackacre Road one way from Dando Road towards Shedden Street.

Another option would see Norman Street and Selbourne Road one way towards Smith Street.

The plans will be discussed at a

meeting of Dudley Central Area Committee on March 15.

A report on the proposals reads: "Before the prohibition of driving order was introduced around 1,000 vehicles used Blackacre Road during each peak hour."

"Over a 12 hour day some 10,000 vehicles used Blackacre Road."

"Following the introduction of the prohibition of driving these figures were halved by means of regular police enforcement."

"These campaigns continue but are of reducing effectiveness and require intensive police activity."

The work would cost in the region of £12,000 to introduce which may be funded through the council's minor works capital allocation budget.

Councillors will be asked for their views.

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Fan's 400-mile trip to see PJ



Ron Tennant with PJ Proby in the garden of the singer's house, "Little California", near Evesham

By Sarah Hazelwood

s.hazelwood@expressandstar.co.uk

A FORMER Midlander now living in Belgium is making a 400-mile trip to be reunited with a pop legend.

Ron Tennant, who moved from Birmingham more than 30 years ago, returns every couple of months to see PJ Proby strut his stuff on stage.

On Friday, Stourbridge Town Hall will host One Night of Elvis starring Lee "Memphis" King and his orchestra and singers with special guest PJ Proby, original star of Elvis the Musical.

While Ron is a frequent traveller to watch the star, this will be just the second time that he and his family have returned to England together since 1996.

Sixty-three-year-old Ron has been a fan of Proby across four decades, after first meeting the one-time hellraiser in Bolton back in the 1980s.

Ron said: "I am a huge fan of PJ and have been for many years. In my eyes he is a world star and I have got so much

memorabilia from over the years to remember him by. I absolutely love the man and his music - he could easily have been as big as Elvis.

"His unique personality and rare talent combined make him a world star. He is a perfectionist and this is very clear in his performances, they are always flawless.

"After some setbacks throughout his life he has always bounced back, bigger and better. There aren't many like him around. He's a real crowd pleaser."

Proby, real name James Marcus



Lee 'Memphis' King on stage as Presley



Ron Tennant with just some of the items in his extensive collection of memorabilia

PJ Proby on stage giving his interpretation of Elvis Presley songs



Smith, is originally from Texas, but has lived at the home near Evesham he calls "Little California" for many years.

Now aged 72, the music marvel compiled several demo discs for some of Elvis' biggest hits. He was a major star of the 60s with a string of hits including Hold Me, Somewhere and Maria.

But the stage appearances of Proby - great-grandson of outlaw John Wesley Hardin - attracted controversy in those more sedate times, particularly when his trousers split, and he was effectively banned.

For tickets and details, contact the Stourbridge Town Hall box office on 01384 812812.



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If you're not getting as much rest as you need, try following these simple tips to help yourself to get a better night's sleep.

Keep regular hours. Going to bed and getting up at roughly the same time, all the time, will programme your body to sleep better. Choose a time when you are most likely to feel sleepy.



William & Son's extensive bedding department

Create a restful sleeping environment. Your bedroom should be kept for rest and sleep and it should be neither too hot, nor too cold; and as quiet and dark as possible.

Make sure your bed is comfortable. It's difficult to get deep, restful sleep on one that's too soft, too hard, too small or your existing bed no longer offers the comfort or support it once did.

For less than 60p per night a couple can enjoy the comforts of a £1500 bed over seven years – considerably less than it would cost to have a daily newspaper over the same period.

Try to relax before going to bed. Have a warm bath, listen to some quiet music, do some yoga, practise some visualisation techniques - all help to relax and prepare the mind and body for sleep.

Deal with worries or a heavy workload by making lists of things to be tackled the next day.

Take more exercise. Regular, moderate exercise such as swimming or walking can help relieve the day's stresses and strains. But not too close to bedtime or it may keep you awake!

Cut down on stimulants such as caffeine in tea or coffee - especially in the evening. They interfere with falling asleep and prevent deep sleep. Have a hot milky drink or herbal tea instead.

Don't over-indulge. Too much food or alcohol, especially late at night, just before bedtime, can play havoc with sleep patterns. Alcohol may help you

fall asleep initially, but will interrupt your sleep later on in the night.

Don't smoke. Yes, it's bad for sleep, too: smokers take longer to fall asleep, wake more often and often experience more sleep disruption.

If you can't sleep, don't lie there worrying about it. Get up and do something you find relaxing until you feel sleepy again - then go back to bed.

The Sleep Council is a generic body that aims to:

- Raise awareness of the importance of a good night's sleep to health and wellbeing.
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- Provide helpful advice on choosing the right bed for optimum sleeping comfort.

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**The Sleep Council, High Corn Mill,
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www.sleepcouncil.com**



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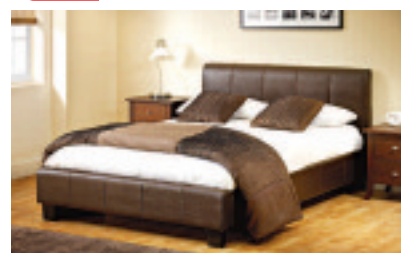
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thechronicle

Boss blows a fuse over expensive power cuts at factory



Furious boss
Rod Laight has lost thousands of pounds due to the power lost, the third of which meant he had to send workers home

THE boss of a Cradley Heath firm said to have lost thousands of pounds after suffering three power cuts within a week has been told it is "just one of those things".

Central Networks said that Reddifast Steels Ltd, in Stourdale Road, was "unlucky" to have been affected so frequently and stressed there is no permanent problem with the network. But managing director Rod Laight said the

company has lost up to £10,000 during each power cut.

Workers at the metal processing plant had to be sent home at 2pm on Thursday, February 24, 2pm the following day and 3.40pm on Monday, February 28, when power failed.

Jonathan Smith at Central Networks said the company had been unlucky. He said: "All three power cuts were under-

ground cable faults on different parts of the network. Unfortunately it is just one of those things."

A Wednesbury firm Interia said it, too, was losing thousands of pounds because of power outages.

The IT firm, which sells kitchen and bathroom suites online, says it has regular power failures at sites in Portway Road, Holyhead Road and Potters Lane.

Wheels in motion for new Heathens' track

A NEW speedway stadium could be built on vacant factory land in the Black Country following talks between campaigners and council chiefs.

Supporters of the former Cradley Heathens have long campaigned for a new permanent home for the team since its Dudley Wood stadium was developed for housing more than 15 years ago.

The speedway club, in its new guise as Dudley Heathens, is just about to embark on its second season.

Talks

Members of campaign group Cradley Raising Aid Saving Heathens have been in talks with both Dudley and Sandwell councils in an attempt to find land for a new stadium.

Group member Bob Edwards says the group met Sandwell cabinet member for leisure, culture and youth, Councillor Ann Shackleton to discuss the issue.

He revealed that vacant former industrial land within Sandwell may be lined up as the site for a new circuit.

"Sandwell Council has said there is the possibility of redundant employment land within the area where there could be a track," he said.

"Our talks are at an early stage as the council say the land isn't available yet but that it might be in the future.

"We feel like the talks are progressing and are positive at the moment

but it's just a case of waiting to see what might happen.

"It could be an ideal solution for the club."

Cllr Shackleton said discussions had been held but no firm decision had been made yet.

"We are currently looking at what suitable sites there may be in the borough," she added.

Around 1,000 speedway fans have packed the terraces in Wolverhampton's Monmore Green stadium and Perry Barr stadium, in Birmingham, to follow the Heathens at their home meetings.

But supporters say the club needs a permanent base to call its own.

The group has been boosted by the news that silencers used to reduce exhaust noise have been given the thumbs up by planners in Birmingham.

Speedway team, the Birmingham Brummies, have used the devices on their bikes this season. Their use was enough to convince planners in the city to allow the sport to continue at the Perry Barr stadium.

Mr Edwards has used the example in discussions with the two authorities.

"We have really enjoyed having our meetings in Perry Barr and Wolverhampton but I'm sure for most of our fans, having to travel has not been an ideal set of circumstances. It has been a great season and it is a crucial time now to try and focus on the stadium," he said.

Support is music to the ears



Ready to perform for the hospice are, from left: John Corbett, Christina Podwell, Ann Pollard and David Dunn

A HOSPICE in Stourbridge is set to benefit from a fundraising show at the Town Hall this Saturday.

Brierley Hill Musical Company is staging A Grand Night for Singing, with money raised going to Mary Stevens Hospice.

The music group will be singing songs from the shows and the performance starts at 7.30pm.

Janet Jones, head of fundraising at

Mary Stevens Hospice, said: "We are most grateful to the theatre company for their ongoing support.

"They have performed for the hospice at the Town Hall for many years and it is always a popular evening out."

Tickets are £7 and can be booked by calling Irene on 0121 550 8631 or the Mary Stevens fundraising office on 01384 377778.

Drivers fined for hospital parking

MORE than 900 motorists have been fined for parking illegally on roads near Dudley's Russells Hall Hospital in the past 12 months.

The figures have been released weeks after Dudley Council pledged to tackle the "parking nightmare" on roads surrounding the hospital.

Nearby residents complain that staff from the hospital continue to clog surrounding streets with cars, despite a £6 million, 691-space car park opening.

now be created for staff. Managers are assessing how many permits they can issue for the 1,123 spaces at the hospital.

Chief executive Paula Clark said: "The trust is constantly reviewing the number of parking spaces available at Russells Hall Hospital.

Restricted

"If the need arises we wouldn't rule out applying for planning permission for further spaces."

During the last 12 months there have been 720 tickets issued to drivers on Pensnett High

Street, 187 on Pensnett Road and 39 in Bushey Fields Road.

Fines issues are either £50 or £70 depending on the offence but are reduced by 50 per cent if paid within 14 days.

The council is to consult residents about alternative proposals to deter motorists from overflowing of the hospital to park in nearby streets.

Officials are asking for views on proposals for restricted access to Pearce Close, Dereton Close, Abbotford Drive and Elgar Crescent.

Staff raise £10,000 for charity

A LAW firm has raised more than £10,000 for a special needs support group.

Higgs & Sons, based at the Waterfront, Brierley Hill, raised the cash last year for the Wombourne-based Wings charity.

The charity provides social opportunities for disabled children and their families, running evening, weekend and holiday activities.

During the past year, staff at the firm staged fund-raising events including a quiz and exercise bike ride.



In full voice – members of Market Drayton Choral Society rehearsing for their spring concert.

Society's preparing to spring into song



Market Drayton Choral Society members are on song in a big way, preparing for a major spring concert they're staging at the town's Festival Centre in early May.

Weekly rehearsals are in full swing at Market Drayton Junior School and will be stepped up before they take to the stage with offerings like *Little Jazz Mass*, *Summer Sunday* and *In the Beginning*.

Musical director Ken Sterling says he's pleased with progress and forecasts that the event, on May 7, will be a memorable addition to the town's entertainment calendar.

Tickets are now on sale at £10 for adults, £8.50 for concessions or £25 for a family of up to five.

For more information or to book tickets call 01690 672424.

LEFT: Some of the singers in action.



Musical director Ken Sterling at the piano.



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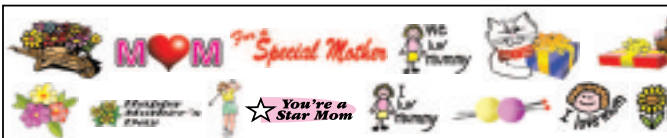
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thechronicle

Fundraiser goods are stolen from elderly



Heartbreaking – club secretary Keith Pritchard



Some of the mess left behind by the raiders

YOBS broke into a club house for the elderly and stole items that would have been sold to raise cash for a holiday.

The stereo system and vacuum cleaner were taken from Darby End Senior Citizens Club in Worcester Road, Netherton, Dudley. And the thieves left a trail of damage behind.

The stolen items had been donated for a nearly-new sale to generate spending money for a holiday to Weston Super-Mare.

The thieves even tore open some birthday cards that had been left for one of the group members to see if there was any cash inside.

Christine Nicholls had not attended the weekly gathering on Monday afternoon so her pals had left the cards on the chair she usually sits in.

Struggle

Club secretary Keith Pritchard said: "It is really heartbreaking. They must have known that this is a senior citizens' group and that we are based here."

"How low can you be to do this and pilfer from old people?" The group has been based at the Dudley Council-owned hut since it was formed 50 years ago.

Mr Pritchard said up to £150 could have been raised by selling the stereo and vacuum cleaner.

"They would have been the most expensive items, so we'll struggle to make that much now," he added.

Mr Pritchard said the break-in must have happened between about 1pm last Wednesday and 11am on Friday. Anyone with information should call West Midlands Police on 0345 1135000.

Ex-dentist climbs new heights to help charity



Robert Marsh

A FORMER Sedgley dentist has climbed the world's highest freestanding mountain, all in the name of charity.

Robert Marsh, from Codsall, scaled Mount Kilimanjaro to raise funds for Leukaemia and Lymphoma Research in memory of his wife Sue, who died from leukaemia complication in 2000.

Brother-in-law Paul Matson, nephew Ian Matson and daughter Michelle Oates joined Robert on his epic eight-day trek, which was timed with what would have been Sue's 60th birthday.

Response

So far the quartet has raised £9,000 for the research charity.

"I got acute altitude sickness in the summit camp so unfortunately couldn't make it up the last 800 metres," the 63-year-old said.

Robert used to run the Bloomfield House dental practice with Sue in Sedgley and said that the fundraising response from former colleagues had left him gobsmacked. Money can still be donated on the website, www.just-giving.com/robert-marsh/1

Alan all set for peak return

A WARDEN at Himley Park is preparing for a tough shift when he tackles Mont Blanc for the second time to raise money for Cancer Research UK.

Alan Peace, from Wombourne, will set off for the Alps on June 26, to mark his 65th birthday.

His previous attempt in 2009 was cut short only a few hundred metres from the summit when his group was beaten back by 'white out' blizzard conditions.

Over the past six years he has raised in excess of £30,000 for the charity, following the death of his wife, Joan, to the disease in 2004.

He was named as Cancer Research UK's Ambassador of the Year in 2009 as well as receiving an Express & Star Local Heroes award.

Fulfilling

Alan, who has been climbing for 50 years, said: "To have continued back in 2009 would have been far too dangerous."

He added: "As well as fulfilling a personal ambition of mine, I also want to raise funds for Cancer Research UK to enable the charity to continue its vital work into researching the causes and treatments for an evil illness."

Alan who remarried in October last year has the full support of his wife, Debbie. To support him contact Alan on 01902 895207, or donate on-line at www.justgiving.com/Alan-Peace

Business couple in £122k benefit fiddle

A DUDLEY couple who ran successful motor businesses while claiming £122,000 benefits have been jailed.

Judge Michael Challinor said Emma Crumpton and David Evans had run a "cynical, sophisticated, deliberate, consistent, well-concealed" scam for more than 11 years.

Crumpton, aged 35, of Tipton Road, admitted two charges of fraud and one of cheating the public purse by claiming incapacity benefit while she was running her own company from July 1997

to January 2009. She received £74,995 in benefits she should not have had, and was sentenced to 21 months behind bars.

Alcohol

She claimed she had been pressured into committing the crime.

Evans, 58, who lived at the same address, pleaded guilty to one charge relating to incapacity benefit, claiming £47,991 during the same period. He was sent to prison for 12 months.

Judge Challinor, passing sentence at Wolverhampton Crown

Court last week, said: "This offence was the result of greed, and not of any other reason."

The pair set up Castle Motors and Ex-Lease Cars in July 1997, despite starting to claim incapacity benefit in 1994.

Mr Gurdeep Garcha, for Evans, said: "He feels consumed by guilt."

Mr Simon Hanns, defending Crumpton, said she suffered alcohol abuse and would not receive the help she needed in prison.

Towpath to be sculptor's trail of £40,000 art



Project manager Jon Pritchett, Alan Hazeldine, treasurer of Dudley Canal Trust, Brian Atkins from Bumblehole Conservation Group and Luke Perry

AN ENGINE house will be the focal point of artwork in a new £40,000 sculpture trail along a Black Country canal.

Cradley Heath sculptor Luke Perry was joined by members of Dudley Canal Trust and Bumble Hole Conservation Group to show off designs as the project was announced this week.

It will see 35 two dimensional sculptures displayed along a five mile stretch of the Dudley Canal.

Logo

And the logo for the project which will be used on all the mile markers will be the Cobb's Engine House in Bumble Hole which has a large distinctive chimney.

The trail will stretch from Blowers Green Bridge in Pear Tree Lane, Dudley, along the canal through Bumble Hole Nature Reserve on the Sandwell border to the Gorsty Hill Tunnel, Old Hill.

The project has been funded by Dudley Canal Trust.

Artist Luke, aged 27, also helped build a 20-ton anchor to replicate the one on the Titanic, built in Netherton.

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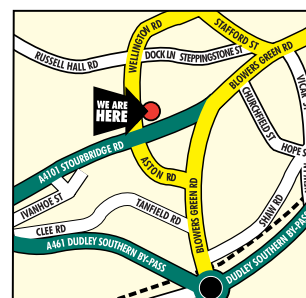
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Jack Thorne, aged 10, tests his lung capabilities with a peak flow meter



Trying out the hoist is Lucas Murphy who is being lifted by Church of Ascension School classmate Harry Mitchell



Having his blood pressure checked by Nick Inley from Classroom Medics is 10-year-old pupil Aaron Huntley



Checking out dummy Stan, from left, Amy Nichols, Charlie-Ann Gennard and Charlie Goddard, all 10

Pupils show healthy interest in medicine

THEY have given hundreds of school-children in Dudley an insight into a career in medicine.

But today Classroom Medics, workshops set up physician Tom Warrender, face an uncertain future because of spending cuts.

Tom, aged 30, who lives in Pendeford, Wolverhampton, completed a degree in human physiology and taught nurses at Birmingham City University before quitting his job to take on his new venture.

Funding comes from the Government's Aim Higher scheme, which is having its funding cut in July. That means individual schools must then decide if they have enough money to afford the workshops.

Tom said: "We are working with schools in the Dudley area as part of a pilot project that aims to get primary school children to think about their career before they go to secondary school."

"As well as talking to them about jobs in the medical profession there is also a strong health aspect to the workshops."

Tom, who has also launched a new website at www.classroommedicsblog.co.uk offering revision tips and exam advice, runs the business with his wife Davina.

He added: "It is a shame to think that a lot of children will miss out. We are talking to schools about doing shorter sessions to make it more affordable for them."

Youngsters at Church of Ascension Primary in Wall Heath, Dudley, had the chance to work with a patient simulator called Stan and learn to check their blood pressure and lung capacity as well as how to move a patient using a hoist.

Decisions

Tom says he enjoys seeing the reaction from children when his team turn up at the school in New Street.

"As soon as I pull Stan out of the car I get them saying 'is that a dead body,'" says Tom, who used to be a pupil at Ounsdale High School in Wombourne.

"We get a great reaction when we come into the school because we are all dressed up in scrubs with pieces of medical kit, which the

Tom Warrender finds the children receptive

children have never used before. We want to help them make a more informed decision about their life."

Like most 10-year-old boys, Lucas Murphy dreamed of becoming a famous footballer – but now his aspirations have turned in a different direction following a visit to Church of Ascension Primary by Classroom Medics.

A workshop at the school showed youngsters the wide range of jobs available in the medical sector.

Lucas said: "We have learnt things like where the pulses are in a person's body and what their heart rate should be. It has made me think seriously about going to work in a hospital."

Classmate Charlie Goddard, 10, said she was surprised by how many NHS jobs there were. "We have learnt about different health jobs and I had no idea there are over 400 to choose from - I took a guess at there being 30."

Jessica Crook, aged 10, added: "The workshop has made me think about becoming a doctor."

Free wi-fi at town libraries

TOWNSFOLK in Dudley can now log on to the internet for free with their web enabled gadgets at libraries across the borough.

A pilot scheme was launched at a number of Dudley Council-run libraries in September and bosses say it has been such a success the system is now available at all borough libraries.

Anyone with a web-enabled smart phone, laptop or other device can use designated free wi-fi hot spots in all libraries to connect to the internet.

Councillor David Simms, cabinet member for housing, libraries and adult learning, said: "The pilot scheme has proved really successful with many people visiting libraries on a monthly basis to make the most of the new service."

"People just need to be a library member to benefit from the free wi-fi as they will need their library card ticket and PIN to log on, but it's really simple to sign up and join the libraries."

School's leaflet on diet choices

A PRIMARY school has produced a leaflet telling parents about the importance of providing healthy packed lunches for their children.

It has been drawn up by staff at Rowley Hall Primary, Rowley Regis. It advises on using a range of food types and also gives guidance on free school meals. Headteacher Lynda Townsend said: "Making healthy food choices assists readiness for learning and helps reduce obesity."

Fitness for over-50s

A NEW exercise class for the over-50s has started in Sedgley this week. All Saints Community Hall in Church Street is the venue for the hour-long classes every Thursday. They will start at 3.30pm. For information telephone 07765 138475.

Advice to the eco-aware

TIPS about how to save money and be eco-friendly are being displayed at Hagley Library, Worcester Road, as part of its bid to become an eco-centre.

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YOUR Neighbourhood...

Keeping fit can help to peel back the years



Keeping fit can be fun and a good way to make new friends

BY the time most of us reach the age of 50 or 60 we tend to accept the negative effects of ageing as a fact of life that we have little or no control over.

It is true that we can not stop the calendar from marching ahead at what seems to be a faster and faster pace, however, recent studies have shown that we can alter the rate at which our bodies progress through our life cycle.

We now have a better understanding of why some people tend to age much faster than others. There is a large body of scientific evidence that suggests that we can slow down and even reverse the symptoms of aging. In fact many of us can be in better health in our 70s than we were in our 50s.

Recent studies indicate that between the ages of 30-70 many of the symptoms and conditions that were traditionally associated with normal ageing are in fact the result of sedentary lifestyles.

Energetic

Evaluating one's strength, endurance, mobility and cardio-vascular-pulmonary performance before and after a one-month period of complete bed rest can be equated to 30 years of aging.

The good news is that regular exercise incorporated into our lifestyle can improve our heart and respiratory function, lower our blood pressure, increase our strength, improve bone density, improve flexibility, quicken our reaction time, reduce body fat, increase muscle mass, and reduce our susceptibility to depression and disease.

Studies have shown that regular exercise

by middle aged and elderly people can set back the clock 20-40 years when compared to those who do little or no exercise.

Test results show that no matter when a person starts to exercise, significant improvement can be achieved. In one study of more than 200 men and women aged 56-87, 'dramatic changes' were observed after just six weeks of exercising three to five times a week. Study participants became as fit and energetic as people 20-30 years younger.

Stronger

Among once-sedentary women in their 50s who participated in an aerobic dance program for six years, fitness improved by 23 per cent and they experienced none of the functional declines typically seen with increasing age.

This group appears to have stopped the clock at an age when functional declines are usually apparent.

Comparing bone loss among women in their 80s. With those women who did seated exercises for 30 minutes, three times a week for three years, bone mineral actually increased by 2.29 per cent, whereas in a similar group of inactive women, bone loss averaged 3.28 per cent.

Various studies have shown that when our bones are taxed from exercise they grow stronger and denser and more resistant to fracture. Aerobic exercise has been shown to enhance blood flow to various parts of the brain as well as to increase the speed with which nerve messages travel through the brain.

In a study among previously sedentary

middle aged men who took part in a four-month exercise and fitness program, a significant improvement was noted in the mental processes controlled by the part of the brain (left hemisphere) responsible for logical reasoning. The men who exercised three times per week, were compared on 1 tests of mental ability to a similar group of men who remained sedentary.

In a study recently published in the Annals of Internal Medicine, older adults who exercised at least three times a week were 38 per cent less likely to develop Alzheimer's disease, which causes a slow, irreversible decline in brain function.

The theory is that exercise not only increases blood flow and oxygen to the brain, it may also reduce the tell-tale 'plaque' in the brain associated with Alzheimer's disease.

Alertness

Aerobic exercise strengthens your heart, helps prevent the build up of cholesterol, improves the functioning of the liver, pancreas and most vital organs.

Aerobic exercise brings additional oxygen and glucose to the brain, both of which are crucial to brain function. Exercise also promotes attention and alertness, both of which are needed to get information into your memory.

Exercise is clearly the best weapon we have to combat disease, to slow down and reverse the effects of aging. It is no wonder that the experts in the field believe that exercise is the closest thing we have to a Fountain of Youth.

Information from www.befitoverfifty.com

YOUR Neighbourhood...

How to home in on right care package

ONCE you have made the decision to move into a care home you need to begin the process of choosing the right one for you as this can often take some time.

Your local council can help you choose a care home and, after a financial assessment, may contribute towards the cost.

Your right to choose

You have the right to choose which care home you live in. If your local council is helping with your fees you can still choose as long as:

- Your choice is suitable for your care needs
- There is a place available
- They can agree a contract with the care home to make sure you receive the support you need
- The cost is not more than the local council normally pays for someone with your assessed needs

If possible you should visit care homes that you are considering to make sure they meet your current and possible future needs. You might like to have a checklist with you of points that are important to you in case you forget to ask something.

Things you might want to consider:

- Are staff adequately trained to care for people with your disability or needs?
- Is it accessible?
- Is appropriate equipment available - for example handrails, hoists, adjustable baths and armchairs?
- Can you keep your own doctor?
- Can your food and dietary needs be met?
- Can your religious or cultural needs be met?

Talking to staff, residents and managers can help you get an idea what living there might be like. You should feel able to visit more than once.

Finding the right care home can take some time. If you have specific or complex care needs it can sometimes be difficult. Charities and organisations related to your specific disability might be able to offer advice about choosing a care home.



Take time to choose wisely is so important

There are relatively few care homes able to meet the needs of younger disabled people - your local council should be able to tell you about those in your area.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspects all registered care homes and writes a report on what they find. Reading the reports of the care homes you are considering might help you make a choice - you can read them online on the CQC website.

On the CQC website you can search for care homes with and without nursing care. You can also look for care homes that provide care for people with:

- Learning disabilities
- Physical disabilities
- Sensory impairments
- Dementia
- Mental disorders

National minimum standards issued by the Department of Health state that care homes should offer trial stays. This may include the chance to meet staff, have a meal and an overnight stay.

If the care home does not have a place you can arrange to go into a different care home while you wait for a place or arrange for services at home. If your local council is helping with costs then they can help you with either of these options.

What if you want a care home in a different area? You may wish to move to a care home in a different local council district to the one where you currently live. This could be because you want to be near to relatives or the place where you grew up.

If you have been assessed as needing care and your local council has agreed to pay for you, then they are responsible for your fees if you choose a care home somewhere else.

Under certain circumstances your local council may be able to pay the care home fees if they are more expensive.

If the person you care for is not able to express their choice then the local council should take your preferences into account. Information from www.dhs.gov.uk

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the pulse

Eliza hopes to do a lot

ONE of the brightest British pop breakthroughs of 2010 was the delightful Eliza Doolittle with her self-titled debut album, which was back in the top 10 last week despite being released last summer.

Her breezy freewheeling retro pop has more hooks than a fishing tackle shop and the latest track to be released as a single – Mr Medicine – follows the success of Skinny Genes and Pack Up.

Real name Eliza Sophie Caird, the 22-year-old is the grand-daughter of Sylvia Young, famous for her London theatre school. Her father, John Caird, is a director with the Royal Shakespeare Company and her mother, Frances Ruffelle, was the original Eponine in West End blockbuster Les Misérables. So there must be something in those genes, skinny or otherwise.

In the autumn she achieved that rare feat for a support act at Wolverhampton's Civic Hall when she got a full house for her short set before headliner Paloma Faith, and the London-born singer and model will have a capacity audience again when she performs at the city's Wulfrun Hall on Saturday, April 2.

Old punks ready to be heroes to more

ONE of the most influential bands of the punk era, The Stranglers, are back on the road. The rock veterans, who in the 70s widened the musical horizons of punks with their tracks rich with keyboards as well as aggressive energy, issued a greatest hits plus new tracks double album recently, Decades Apart, that serves as reminder of their impact on the British music scene.

The band formed in Guildford, Surrey, in 1974, though none came from the town and they were an odd assortment of classically trained guitarist, jazz drummer and blues musicians, united by an appreciation of psychedelic rock groups like The Doors. They became one of the biggest bands of the punk era with a hardman image and songs such as Grip, Peaches/Go Buddy Go, Five Minutes and No More Heroes.

They then went on to have massive crossover success in the 80s with a mellower sound typified by Golden Brown, Strange Little Girl, Skin Deep and Always The Sun.

The band's original singer Hugh Cornwell quit the group to go solo in 1990 and Paul Roberts was the singer during the rest of that decade. He left in 2006 for an acting career and is now working as a Frank Sinatra impersonator.

The Stranglers are now a quartet featuring originals Jean-Jacques Burnel (born in London to French parents) as singer and bassist, keyboardist Dave Greenfield and 72-year-old drummer Jet Black, with Baz Warne, singer and guitarist with the band since 2000. They are in concert at Birmingham's O2 Academy on March 19. Their former frontman, Hugh Cornwell, is also on tour soon playing Wolverhampton's Slade Rooms on April 15.

The Stranglers

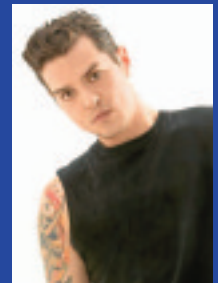


TV listings start – page 31

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Theatre and show round-up – page 35



Matt busts into dance – page 30

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Matt busts into dance musical leading role

MATT Willis, singer from pop group Busted and I'm A Celebrity winner, will headline his first national theatre tour in Footloose The Dance Musical playing the role of Chuck when the show can be seen at Birmingham Hippodrome from Monday to Saturday, March 14-19.

Directed and choreographed by Olivier award-winner Karen Bruce, Footloose promises the slickest, sexiest dance routines. It tells the story of city boy Ren who has to move to a rural backwater in America where he discovers that dancing is banned. Anyone who misses the show at the Hippodrome can catch up with it when it returns to the West Midlands for a run at Wolverhampton's Grand Theatre in late June.

Roald Dahl has never been more popular, especially after the success of Tim Minchin's musical Matilda at Stratford. Another one of his curious tales for children,

George's Marvellous Medicine, is back in Birmingham by popular demand, staged by the city's own professional Birmingham Stage Company at the New Alexandra Theatre from Tuesday to Saturday, March 15-19. The story tells of how

George attempts to cure his grandmother's terrible temper with a potion, with unexpected results.

The Alex also hosts some star name one-

nighters. These include The Solid Silver 60s tonight (Thurs) which is to feature The Merseybeats, Wayne Fontana, Chris Farlowe and The Crying Game hit-maker Dave Berry. Cornish comedian Jethro brings adults-only humour to the venue on Sunday. Showbiz star Joe Longthorne will be singing at the Alex on Monday. Next weekend the theatre hosts former Supreme Mary Wilson with very special guests The Chi-Lites on Sunday, March 20.

Welsh National Opera complete their run at Birmingham Hippodrome with Verdi's passionate tragedy Il Trovatore tonight, and on Saturday. In contrast, they present the comic opera Die Fledermaus, by Johann Strauss II, tomorrow (Fri).

Alistair MacGowan will be the Pirate King when Gilbert and Sullivan's The Pirates of Penzance gets a concert airing at the Symphony Hall in Birmingham on Sunday night.

Catch a rising star when Birmingham Conservatoire present Janacek's opera The Cunning Little Vixen at The Crescent Theatre in Birmingham from tonight to Saturday. Meanwhile, The Crescent's own company stage the comedy Women On The Verge of HRT in the Sheepcote Street theatre's Ron Barber Studio to Saturday.

Cunning

Wolverhampton Musical Comedy Company present one of the first amateur productions of Disney's High School Musical at the Wolverhampton Grand from Tuesday to Saturday (March 15 to 19). Cranford continues until Saturday.

Icarus Theatre's fast and frenetic version of Shakespeare's Hamlet is at Wolverhampton's Arena Theatre tonight. Maggie Fox and Sue Ryding spoof the Brontës in Lip Service's Withering Looks at the Arena tomorrow (Fri). Bertolt Brecht's classic drama about civil war and sacrifice, The Caucasian Chalk Circle, is staged by Blackeyed Theatre at the Arena on Monday.

Then on Tuesday London Classic Theatre visit the Wulfruna Street venue with the brutal love story After Miss Julie, relocated in Patrick Marber's version to an English country house on the night of Labour's landslide victory in 1945. Another classic, John Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men, is presented by Mind The Gap at the Arena on Wednesday and Thursday, March 16 and 17.

Talawa Theatre Company look at what it means to be young, British and black in Krunch tomorrow and Saturday at The Drum in Aston. Further afield, Shaun The Sheep stars in his own music and dance extravaganza at Stoke's Regent Theatre to Sunday. Then the Russian State Ballet of Siberia will be in residence in Hanley from March 17-19. They then move on to Wolverhampton's Grand from March 20-22 with a programme including The Nutcracker, Romeo And Juliet and Swan Lake.

Comedy highlights include Terry Alderton at The Slade Rooms in Wolverhampton tonight; Ed Byrne at Dudley Concert Hall tomorrow (Fri); Simon Munnery in The Slade Rooms on Saturday; Canadian Tom Stacey at the Wulfruna Hall on Tuesday; and Ed Byrne is back for a gig at Birmingham Town Hall on Wednesday.



A scene from the show (Tye is on the right)

High note as young group to net a first

THE youthful team at Wolverhampton Musical Comedy Company (Muscom) are one of the first amateur companies to stage Disney's High School Musical.

The story about sweethearts Troy and Gabriella, whose love threatens to disrupt the American high school status quo between basketball 'jocks', science-loving 'braniacs' and budding stars of the drama club, has yielded two hit Disney movies and albums.

Holly Stringfellow from Perton will play Gabriella Montez and Tye Harris, of Dudley, will be Troy Bolton. Tye, aged 19, is currently studying for a Drama and Performance degree at Wolverhampton University. This is the first time he has performed with MUSCOM.

The show is to be staged at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Tuesday, March 15 to Saturday, March 19.

Rivals

Their rivals in the musical, Sharpey Evans and her brother Ryan, will be played by Kimberley Robinson, of Codsall, and Pip Harper from Wednesfield.

The show features hit songs Start Of Something New, When There Was Me And You, Bo To The Top, Getcha Head In The Game, Breaking Free and We're All In This Together.

It will be interesting to see how Muscom's production stands up against the professional version which was a sell-out success at the Grand three years ago.

Tickets are priced from £5 to £17 (concessions available). Contact the box office on (01902) 429212 or online at www.grandtheatre.co.uk

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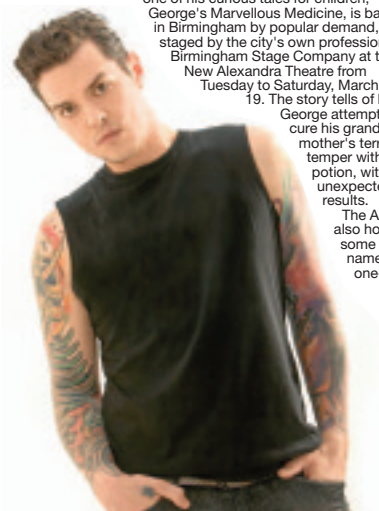
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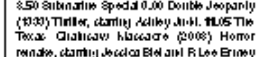
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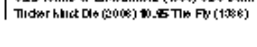


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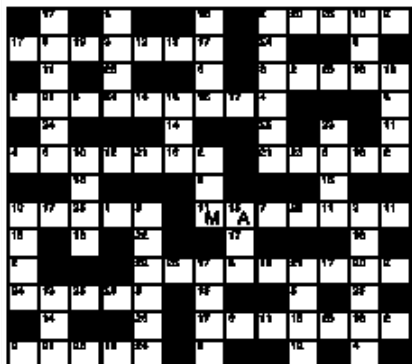
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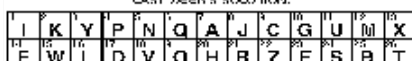
No.107

Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:



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Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

Cryptic Clues:

Across

1. Used a declaration the first (4)
7. Kind of spirit found in petrol lighters (6)
9. Consumed almost tea (3)
10. Ring tune about paying another visit (8)
12. Hoax by air (6,6)
15. Quarter of mooring dates may pin wide the rest (4, 4)
17. Sunny reflections (8)
19. Pull two out at shape (3)
21. Unpleasant feature of the River Sever (6)
22. Wide allow ancient (4)

Down

- 1 & 9. Do. It will give you full power (6, 6)
2. When departure? (3)
3. Lies about a piece of land (4)
4. Countries may share them between them (8)
5. See 1 Down
8. A bit of a blow for those wanting refreshments (6)
11. Kindly support (8)
13. Run away from Patsy Smith (6)
14. It sits on the body (4)
16. Not the best man (6)
18. Teachers do it for money (4)
20. Number in the phone book (3)

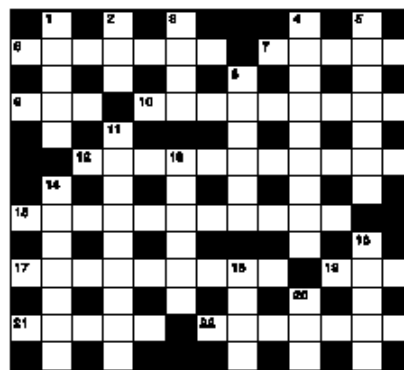
Quick Clues:

Across

1. Eerie (4)
7. Fire eating (6)
9. Attempt (3)
10. Meet (8)
12. Drabbed (11)
15. Moved by Dickens (6,6)
17. Spaciousness (8)
19. Finger (3)
21. Den (3,2)
22. Mediate (4)

Down

1. Eerie (4)
2. Cunning (3)
3. Spell (4)
4. Conductor (8)
5. Literally (4)
8. Great (3)
11. A lot (6,3)
13. Downright (6)
14. Upstart (7)
16. Muse (3)
18. Appeal (4)
20. Bear (3)



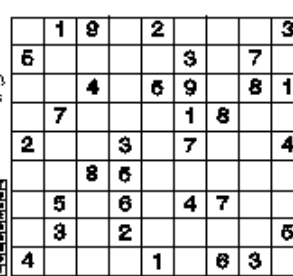
LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

CRYPTIC - Across: 1. Eerie (4), 7. Fire eating (6), 9. Attempt (3), 10. Meet (8), 12. Drabbed (11), 15. Moved by Dickens (6,6), 17. Spaciousness (8), 19. Finger (3), 21. Den (3,2), 22. Mediate (4). Down: 1. Eerie (4), 2. Cunning (3), 3. Spell (4), 4. Conductor (8), 5. Literally (4), 8. Great (3), 11. A lot (6,3), 13. Downright (6), 14. Upstart (7), 16. Muse (3), 18. Appeal (4), 20. Bear (3).

Sudoku

Fill in the grid below so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

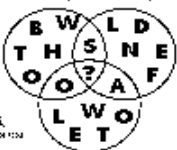


Circlegram

Replace the question mark with a letter so that the letters of the words can be arranged to form words on a common theme. What are the three words, and the letter represented by the question mark?

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

The words represented by the question mark are: B, W, L, D, T, H, S, N, E, O, P, A, F, L, W, O, E, T.



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JOHN PRITCHARD talks to Emma Scott about her mission to find new talent.



Scott on spot to find local bands

is where she got her taste for the Midlands music scene. Her first Emma Scott Presents gig was at the Little Civic in Wolverhampton in 2007. The gig series was originally going to be once a month, but has now grown to around six times a month, which means a lot of travelling for Emma.

She said: "I spend a lot of time on the M5, travelling to and from all my gigs, but it's all worth it." Her first seminar, called Break Your Band, was held at The Slade Rooms last month, and around 80 people heard the speech she gave about the music industry from the promoter and DJ's view.

Feedback

She said: "The feedback I received from the seminar was amazing. I didn't think that many people would turn up and we had a lot of people from bands saying I talked about things they never realised before."

Her book, Break Your Band - A Guide to Getting Radio Airplay, will be available to buy from Amazon next month and advises bands how to put together the perfect press pack, rules of the radio, which presenters play unsigned music and how to get on a station's playlist.

She said: "I hate the thought that bands are wasting their time by sending the wrong material, or missing valuable airplay as they've sent their CD to the wrong address, or offended the DJ by spelling his or her name incorrectly."

"As a presenter I get a real buzz when I get a great press pack in the post, and I get even more excited when the quality of the band is great too! I love the thought that the bands will be listening to their songs on the radio, and try and imagine how great

that must feel." The book contains quotes from Kurt Cobain, Hunter S Thompson, Paul McCartney, Jon Bon Jovi, Van Morrison, Elvis Costello and Lou Reed, which help show what the music industry is really like.

Emma said: "I guarantee any band who read the book and who follow my guidelines will get radio airplay - as long as their music is good, that is!" The 39-year-old has been working in radio for 23 years and has received thousands of demos in her time at various radio stations, including Heart FM and Galaxy.

Last November, her most successful gig to date came when Voodoo Johnson headlined at The Slade Rooms. The five-piece from Birmingham have gone on from strength to strength, from supporting 80s-rock band Europe, of Final Countdown fame, to headlining their own UK Tour, which visits Wolverhampton Slade Rooms on April 24.

Another success story is The Whiskey Syndicate, a rock foursome from Wolverhampton who headlined an Emma Scott Presents gig at The Slade Rooms at the beginning of February, and released their EP Stick or Twisted? earlier this year.

Speaking of The Whiskey Syndicate, Emma said: "These guys are someone to look forward to. I've worked with them a few times and they're great."

The Emma Scott Presents gigs stopped for a brief period as she relocated to just outside Exeter, but were relaunched again in April last year as another success story. The Lines, brought the series back in style.

Since the relaunch, The Lines have gone on to headline the Wulfrun Hall, release their debut album and support local favourites Ocean Colour Scene.

Emma is looking forward to a busy future, with the hope that many of the bands she has nurtured will go on to become staples of the music industry, and, no doubt, there are likely to be more books in the pipeline.

Toploader, who had a massive hit in 2000 with their cover of Dancing In The Moonlight, are back together and touring again. The Eastbourne band, who split after the demise of their record label in 2003 despite selling a million copies of their debut album Onka's Big Moka, will release their third album, Only Human, in May. Their tour includes a date at the HMV Institute in Birmingham on Saturday, March 19.

REVIEWS

PLAN B WOLVERHAMPTON, CIVIC HALL

The Defamation of Strickland Banks became a reality last week as singer Plan B brought his story of wrongdoing to the Civic Hall. Opening with Writing's On The Wall, the sixth single off his album, the London crooner confirmed his transition from bad-boy rapper to soul superstar.

The singer, real name Ben Drew, played a set full of songs off his second album, which tells the story of the fictional singer Strickland Banks, who is jailed for a crime he didn't commit. Songs such as Welcome to Hell, The Recluse and Traded In My Cigarettes document Banks's struggles with coping in jail, while covering up the sadness with shimmering Motown grooves and crooning soul vocals.

The risky move from underground rap to Northern Soul-fuelled pop proved to be a clever one for the singer, as the crowd sang every word of singles She Said and Love Goes Down. His encore picked up the tempo as he did a medley of soul songs, which he said were for the "older crowd".

Jon Pritchard

NE-YO AND TREY SONGZ, BIRMINGHAM NIA

Trey Songz opened with a performance that appealed to the ladies. Having released four albums, he might not yet be a household name, but he certainly had the crowds on his side.

Performing covers and his own songs, including the lead single Bottoms Up from - a collaboration with Nicki Minaj from his latest album Passion, Pain and Pleasure he proved to be an excellent show man.

Ne-Yo followed with a flawless performance of upbeat numbers and emotional love songs.

Talented female dancers kept the main man company on stage, performing both provocative moves and skilled ballet steps.

Ne-Yo said: "I've heard that Birmingham's where the party's at."

This proved to be true as most of the fans spent the whole performance on their feet dancing to hits like So Sick and Beautiful Monster.

With the crowds screaming for more, he ended with an encore of Closer. Tre songz will be back in the UK at O2 Academy Birmingham on April 25.

Alex Wainwright

CRANFORD THE GRAND, WOLVERHAMPTON

This costumed comedy set in the insular world of Cranford is inhabited by a group of repressed, gossip, snobbish and class-ridden women whose biggest dilemma to date is working out how to address a countess.

The cast, lead perfectly by Kathryn Dimery as Miss Matilda Jenkins, go through the motions of Victorian living seeking to keep the status quo of Cranford until circumstances overtake them and make them re-evaluate their social priorities.

The wonderfully dressed women live in the fearful shadow of offending the sensibilities of domineering matriarch The Honourable Mrs Jamieson played with suitable starch by Hildegard Neil. Throw into the melting pot a maid with ambitions, a widowed countess who causes a stir and you have a jolly almost farcical show which produces one liners such as "You can't beat a bit of bondage to keep you warm".

Cranford runs until March 12

Danny Farragher

LA FILLE MAL GARDEE, BIRMINGHAM HIPPODROME

This old favourite from the Birmingham Royal Ballet repertoire delighted audiences with its fun and frolics. Despite its French origins, this was a tale of merry olde England with maypole dancing, harvest festivities, a rustic clown, a clog dancing dame and even giant chickens.

Frederick Ashton's 50-year-old version is an escapist rural fantasy, certainly a tad twee but warmly received by audiences that appreciated its humorous good nature and vibrant energy. Jamie Bond danced powerfully as the young farmer, Elisha Willis was vivacious as his sweetheart and American dancer Mathias Dingman a superb clown as her clumsy suitor. But all were upstaged by the cast's one non-dancer, a white Shetland pony.

Leon Burakowski

ELAINE PAIGE, B-HAM, SYMPHONY HALL

More than 30 years a showbiz diva, Elaine Paige proved that she's still the little lady with the biggest voice with her two-hour concert at Birmingham, which was completed by a standing ovation for the essential encore, Memory from Andrew Lloyd Webber musical Cats.

She had been in character to recall her greatest stage successes, including Evita and Norma Desmond from Sunset Boulevard. Other highlights included her version of Mike Batt's Closest Thing To Crazy, new song It's Only Life (written for her by Gary Barlow and Tim Rice and sung with impressive newcomer Hermione Hennessy) and a showstopping I'm Still Here from Stephen Sondheim's Follies.

Leon Burakowski

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An unfurnished modern detached house, close to local shops, briefly comprising of: Two Reception Rooms, Fitted Dining Kitchen, Downstairs WC, Three Bedrooms, Master Bedroom with En-Suite, Bathroom with Shower, Garage and Driveway Parking, Gardens, Gas Central Heating, Double Glazing

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A brand new unfurnished 3 bed semi detached home, briefly comprising of: Fully Double Glazed and Central Heated, Through Lounge/Diner, Fitted Kitchen, Guest WC, Family Bathroom, Front and Rear Gardens and Two Parking Spaces.

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HALESOWEN, BEECHER STREET

A lovely unfurnished modern semi-detached home, close to local buses, briefly comprising of: Two Bedrooms both En-Suite Bathrooms, Fitted Kitchen, Large Conservatory, Low Maintenance Rear Garden

£599 PCM



HALESOWEN, CHERRY STREET

An unfurnished mid terraced home in a sought after location, briefly comprising of: Living Room, Dining Kitchen, Two Bedrooms, House Bathroom with Shower, Rear Garden, Gas Central Heating, Double Glazing and Rear Parking.

£550 PCM



QUINTON, LAPAL MANOR COURT

An unfurnished first floor apartment with open plan living space, briefly comprising of: Gas Central Heating, Large Lounge/Fitted Kitchen, Two Double Bedrooms, Bathroom with Shower, Secure Parking, Ideal Location for Motorway Access

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Berriman Eaton is managing the sale of Feishill Road in Trysull and inviting offers in the region of £265,000

Three-bed home has greenbelt view

SITUATED in a sought-after South Staffordshire village, this three-bedroomed semi-detached home has impressive views from the front and rear over greenbelt farmland.

The three-bedroomed home, in Feishill Road, Trysull, has been maintained to a high standard by the current owners and extended to the rear and side to provide versatile living accommodation.

A wide range of amenities is available in the nearby village, including a reputable primary school, a church and two pubs. Excellent shopping facilities are on offer in nearby Wombourne.

The Wombourne office of estate agent Berriman Eaton is managing the sale, inviting offers in the region of £265,000.

Approaching, a large asphalt driveway leads to a single garage. There is a neat lawn alongside, surrounded by well stocked borders.

An enclosed uPVC double-glazed porch has a quarry-tiled floor, a door to the garage and a door into the hallway.

This has a radiator, laminate flooring, understairs cupboard and staircase rising to the first floor.

Measuring 16ft x 12ft, the lounge has a front-facing uPVC double-glazed bay window, a coved ceiling, flame-effect gas fire with brick surround and a tiled hearth.

In the dining room, which has dimensions of 11ft 5in x 9ft 6in, there is a wall-mounted gas fire and an archway leading into the kitchen.

Having been refitted in 2009, this measures 12ft 3in x 8ft and has a range of wall and base units with worksurfaces, splash back tiling, a central island with breakfast bar, stainless steel sink, integrated electric oven, gas hob, plumbing for a dishwasher, a radiator, heated towel rail, uPVC double-glazed windows to the side and rear, a door to the garden room and doorway into a pantry area. This measures 5ft 10in x 5ft 2in and has a matching range of wall and base units with worksurfaces.

Utility

In the utility, which has dimensions of 7ft 9in x 5ft 4in, there are base cupboards and drawers with work surfaces, a stainless steel sink, plumbing for a washing machine, matching wall cupboards, splash back tiling, a rear-facing uPVC double glazed window to

the rear and a door to the guest WC.

Measuring 8ft 4in x 6ft 3in, the garden room has uPVC double-glazed double doors to the rear and single-glazed windows at the side and rear.

There is access to the loft from the first floor landing, which has a front-facing uPVC double-glazed window. Measuring 12ft x 11ft 9in, the master bedroom faces the front, while the second faces the rear, measures 12ft x 9ft 9in and has a cast-iron Victorian-style fireplace.

Measuring 17ft 3in x 6ft 5in, the extended third bedroom has windows to the front and rear.

In the bathroom, there is a WC, wash basin, bath with shower over, splashback tiling, a radiator, wall-mounted electric heater and a uPVC double-glazed window to the side.

The rear garden has a patio area, timber shed and greenhouse. What the agent describes as a "beautifully landscaped area" includes a shaped lawn, a variety of shrub borders, a pond, a further patio and a vegetable patch.

Contact the agent's Wombourne office on 01902 326366 to arrange a viewing.



The rear garden is mainly laid to lawn with mature borders and an ornamental fish pond with seating area

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TUCKED away off School Road in Himley is this deceptively spacious, detached dormer bungalow situated in a pleasant location, overlooking a brook and farmland.

The agent Berriman Eaton advises internal viewing of The Old Smithy to appreciate the generously proportioned accommodation – on the market for offers in the region of £495,000.

The house is approached through double gates, leading to a gravelled driveway with a shaped lawn leading to the brook, patio area with feature pond, further lawn area and vegetable patch.

Through the main entrance hall, double doors lead to a cloak cupboard, airing cupboard and the ground floor accommodation.

Burner

To the front of the house is a lounge measuring 18ft 7in x 15ft 2in and includes a cast iron multi-fuel burner set in a chimney recess with brick surround and hearth, two double glazed windows to the side, exposed timber truss, radiator and double doors with glazed side panels to an airy conservatory measuring 14ft 9in x 10ft 4in.

The dining room's dimensions are 18ft 8in x 12ft 9in and this room also has a cast iron, gas fired burner, radiator, double-glazed window to the side and further double-glazed bow window to the side.

A further exposed timber truss is evident and an open tread staircase leads to the first floor with a gallery sitting room measuring 17ft 1in x 11ft 11in and a further door to the breakfast kitchen measuring 19ft x 14ft 8in.

Comprising base cupboards and drawers with worksurfaces, a stainless steel sink, splashback tiling, matching wall cupboards, integrated electric double oven, gas hob with

Dormer is near to farmland



A brook is located to the front of The Old Smithy, a bungalow being marketed by agent Berriman Eaton

extractor hood and dishwasher, the kitchen also includes a dishwasher, fridge, double-glazed window to the front and door to the rear and garage.

All the bedrooms include a double-glazed window, radiator and coved ceilings. Facing the

front is the second bedroom measuring 15ft 7in x 13ft 2in, the third faces the side and is 13ft 1in x 8ft 10in while the fourth, also to the side, measures 13ft 1in x 7ft 8in.

Comprising a WC, bidet, wash basin, bath and shower cubicle the bathroom also has

splashback tiling, radiator and double-glazed window to the side. The master bedroom, which is accessed from the gallery sitting room, measures 20ft 2in x 13ft 1in and has a roof light and door to an en-suite comprising a WC, wash basin, shower cubicle with electric shower,

splash back tiling, radiator, extractor fan and double-glazed window to the side.

A further loft room measures 26ft 8in x 15ft 2in. Further details are available online at www.berrimaneaton.co.uk or to arrange a viewing call 01902 326366.



The lounge includes a large feature fireplace and French doors

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Designer looks for firm's fourth generation supermini due for September release in UK



The new look of the Rio boasts a distinctive new personality and represents a major departure from the previous car's styling

Kia showing off new Rio

Kia's all-new fourth-generation Rio, revealed at the 2011 Geneva Motor Show this week, boasts a bold and distinctive personality, bringing the latest model into line with the rest of the Korean firm's striking design-led product range.

Given the job of improving on the international sales success of the previous generation Rio, Kia's engineers and designers have created a new model designed to appeal to consumers' aesthetic tastes.

However, the car will also drive sales through its low running costs and class-leading CO2 emissions – with target figures for the model range starting at just 85 g/km.

Since its launch in 2005, global sales of the third-generation Rio have totalled more than 860,000 units. It was the company's third best-selling vehicle in overseas markets during 2010 with sales of more than 219,000 units, sales in the UK total 52,626 units.

The new Rio is longer by 20mm, wider by 2mm, and lower by 15mm, greatly enhancing passenger space and cargo capacity. Manufactured for the first time with a choice of five-door and three-door body styles, the new Rio is set to completely redefine its position and Kia is confident of capturing a larger share of the growing B-market segment.

To lower fuel consumption and help achieve the Rio's class-leading emissions, Kia engineers have carried out an extensive programme to shed weight across a broad range of components. As a result, although the new Rio is a significantly larger car than the third-generation model with extra equipment,

its weight-gain has been kept to a minimum.

The five-door version of new Rio will go on sale in the UK from September with the all-new three-door model on sale from early 2012. Both versions will be manufactured exclusively at Kia's Sohari plant in Korea.

This new car is no evolution of its predecessor, it is a revolution. The bold and distinctive personality of the new Rio represents a complete departure from its predecessor and fits perfectly into the revitalised new family of Kia products.

Viewed head-on, new Rio has its own unique interpretation of the Kia corporate grille which is integrated with the front lamps to create a new twist on the Kia family look.

To maximise the impact of Rio's striking appearance is a fresh new palette of 10 body colours.

Segment

With the introduction of the new Rio, the Kia product portfolio has just taken the next important step towards becoming a family of vehicles which has an attractive and coherent brand style but still manages to retain individual product character.

In the UK the new Rio will offer customers a choice of four highly efficient three- and four-cylinder engines – with a 70-109PS power range – and a CO2 base-line rating from just 85 g/km, plus fuel consumption as high as 88.3 mpg.

In many countries, diesel power is the preferred option in this segment and Rio will be available with two versions of Kia's U2 power unit. The 1.4-litre generates 90PS and 216 Nm of torque, while the 1.1-litre produces 70PS and 162 Nm. Both engines deliver maximum torque from just 1,750 rpm.

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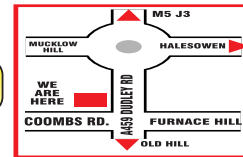
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HUSKY PUPPIES KC applied, 8 weeks can be seen, vaccinated, £500. 07966 670732.

JACK RUSSELL, cross Patterdale and Border Collie, 6 months, good included. £200. 07754 945048.

JACK RUSSELL PUPPIES, 8 weeks, vaccinated, pedigree, legal, docked. £150-£170. 07903 585651.

KIND HOMES WANTED
Sky - 7 month old Collie cross, good with dogs/children. Buster - 6 month old Jack Russell cross Staffie, brindle/white, happy little chap, loves everyone.

Alfie - 3 year old Border Collie, very handsome, long haired black/white, good with other dogs/children, happy, intelligent boy.

Flash - 7 years, Jack Russell, been with older couple who can no longer care for him, nice boy, suit pensioners.

Harvey - American Bulldog, 2 years old, big, soft, gentle giant looking for love. 01588 676106.

KING CHARLES Pup, 10 weeks, nice colours, health checked, vaccinated. £250. 07742 49796.

MINIATURE YORKSHIRE Terrier Puppies, 3 boys. KC Reg. Ready now. £450. 01902 562362.

PIGEONS for sale. Four Bradleys, 500. Four Meyer, 600. 07725 72107.

STAFFORDSHIRE Bull Terrier brindle dog, 12 months, good nature, house trained. £100. 01902 678319.

STAFFORDSHIRE Bull Terrier puppies, ready now. Parents can be seen, 4 bitches, 3 dogs. Family loving homes only. 07581 544884.

STAFFORDSHIRE Bull Terriers 1 bitch, 4 dogs. Black and white. £150. 07940 45331.

STICK INSECTS, Guadeloupe, Peruvian Black Beetles and Rhamnus Thail. Leaf insects. 01902 728179 or 07983 770315.

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BMW 318 318i, 03 reg, 3dr, 1796cc, MoT Oct, 77,000 miles, SH, CD, excellent condition, genuine reason for sale, £2,250 only. 07325 696099.

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CHEVROLET KALOS, 07 reg, 12 months MoT, 6 months tax, low mileage, £2,300 only. 01922 400498 or 07982 241664.

eg. VAUXHALL CORSA 1.4SE, 2007 3-dr silver blue, alloys and long MoT, fsh, 60k, very good condition. £5,000. 01902 317878

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Auto, 1999, 75,500 miles, green, electric windows and mirrors, a/c, MoT Sept, oil, cruise, pas, tax, stereo, CD, leather interior, petrol, towbar. £2,000 only. 0121 6026122.

CITROEN SAXO DESIRE 1.1, 2003, 36,500 miles, silver, electric windows, 1 lady owner, pas, sunroof, CD, great condition. £2,105 only. 0121 5570682.

FORD PUMA 1.7 THUNDER, 2002/02, silver/black leather, 53k miles, full dealer history, excellent condition. Details: dgpendry@orange.net £3,400 only. 07980 596307.

CITROEN SAXO 1.6 VTR
Stunning, 2003, 59k, fsh, light green, fantastic to drive, very economical, full leather interior, alloys, alarm and immobiliser, e/w, e/m, s/r, 6 months tax, MoT. All original showroom condition throughout. 1st to see will buy. Bargain £1,999. 01686 625026 or 07940 058008.

CITROEN XSARA PICASSO 1.6, 03, MoT, low mileage, good condition, £2,100. 07980 557729.

DAIHATSU SIRION 1.8S, 06, 5dr, red, 32,000 miles, 1 owner, 12 months tax, MoT, fsh, £2,450. 07456 706496 or 07980 285631.

DAIMLER CENTURY
Showroom condition, 1996, 9,900 miles only. Cost new £67,000. £12,000 no offers. 01902 741887.

FIAT PUNTO Active, black 53 reg, 42,000 miles, MoT Nov, Tax July. Great condition. Ideal first car. £2,100. 07980 557729.

FORD FOCUS 1.6CL
Estate, 2002, 78k miles, Zetec engine, metallic silver, e/w, e/m, c/l, air bags, pas, long MoT, 2 lady owners. Excellent throughout. £2,195 only. 01743 860380.

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sport

Junior games

GIRLS LEAGUE

HALAS HAWKS 1 GORNAL 0

HALAS Hawks U10s girls inflicted the first defeat of the season on Gornal in a 1-0 win. Halas dominated large parts of the game, especially in midfield where Charlotte Faraday and Maddison Eden were outstanding. This led to a barrage of attacks but they had to settle for one goal from Maddison Eden to give them the points to put them to the top of the table.

GORNAL GIRLS 1 HALAS HAWKS 8

Despite going a goal down, Halas Hawks U12 girls bounced back to score goals through Louise Tromans (3), Lucy Heaslegrave (2), Amy Plimmer, Francesca Hancock and Bethan Bryan.

WITHERMOOR 2 HALAS HAWKS 4

The U13s strengthened their bid for the league title by beating Withermoor with goals from Chelsea Dudson, Amy Blakemore and Sophie Blount.

KIDDER LIONS 4 HALAS HAWKS 0

The U15s gave themselves a mountain to climb after giving away three soft goals in the first quarter of this match at Kidderminster. Kate Drew was player of the match with a strong performance up front and keeper Livi Wooliams made some fantastic saves.

BOYS LEAGUE

BRANDHALL COLTS 2 HALAS HAWKS 2

Having gone down to an early goal against Brandhall, the U9s North dug deep to equalise through Jake Crackett. Jack Bingham put Halas ahead before a Brandhall equaliser just after half time. Despite end-to-end play the deadlock was not broken.

KEFWOLD EAST 2 HALAS HAWKS EAST 0

The U9 East travelled to league leaders Kewford East, who scored their goals before half time. Two players stood out for Halas with Tom Baker keeping us in the game at the back and Oliver Miller working tirelessly on his own up front.

HALAS HAWKS 1 FOREST FALCONS 1

The U10s West drew 1-1 against Forest Falcons with Callum Hudson getting their goal.

HALAS HAWKS 3 GORNAL 0

The U11s beat Gornal with the goals coming in the first half from Jonty Round, Harry Wakeman and Matt Evans.

HALAS HAWKS 1 WITHERMOOR EAST 3

A lively match saw Withermoor take the lead against the U13s but Halas kept up the pressure equalising on the stroke of half time after Liam Holmes slammed in a rebound off the bar after a Halas free kick. The second half saw Withermoor take the advantage and then seal the match 3-1 despite Halas playing some great football. Man of the match went to Jack Bagley.

HALAS HAWKS 4 ENVILLE ATHLETIC 0

The U14s East recorded a comfortable 4-0 victory over Enville Athletic. Hawks' goals arrived from Joe Priest, Kane Campbell, Louis Ezeweale and Dan Willets. Halas are still in second place and only a point from leaders Gornal who they face in their next match in a crucial end of season possible title deciding match.

HALAS HAWKS 5 OLDSWINFORD 0

The U16s and Oldswinford both had chances, but it was Halas who took them, with goals from Kieron McIllduff (2), Alex Chappell, Ben Hughes and Kieran Hilston.

HALAS HAWKS LADIES

CONTINENTAL STAR 0 HALAS HAWKS 4

Halas Hawks Ladies travelled to Continental Star for their final game of the season knowing that a win for either team would probably give them the league runners-up spot. It was Hawks who showed more desire and they thoroughly deserved their 3-0 win with goals from Kirsty Houston, Gemma College and a penalty from Steph Wem.

Vital win as Glassboys prove quick learners

OXFORD CITY 0 STOURBRIDGE 2

FIRST-HALF goals from Leon Broadhurst and Ryan Rowe earned a depleted Glassboys side a vital victory away at Oxford City in the Zamaretto Premier.

With Paul McCone, Ben Billingham, Sam Rock, Paul Lloyd, James Dyson, Craig Connor and Ryan Mahon all missing from the Stourbridge line-up, there was a return to the fold for Daryl Jones who played on the left-hand side of midfield. Youth team players Sam Pritchard and Matt Preston were named among the Stourbridge substitutes.

A cut-up and sanded playing surface was hardly conducive to good football, but the visitors

stuck to their task throughout, particularly in the second period when it was backs-to-the-wall for long spells.

Nathan Bennett proved immense for Gary Hackett's men. Stourbridge drew a first blood after 25 minutes. Jamie Oliver started the move as he fed Rowe who in-turn threaded a pass through to Broadhurst who hit a right-foot shot that took a deflection to leave home keeper Jakub Jesionkowski wrong-footed.

Four minutes before the interval, the Glassboys doubled their advantage with another goal that enjoyed an element of good fortune.

Linden Dovey won a tackle and Rowe ran on to the loose ball in the inside right channel area

before hitting a low angled 20-yard shot that Jesionkowski should have saved as he dived down to his left.

However, the ball squeezed under his arm to provide the visitors with a two-goal cushion.

City were quickly onto the attack after the restart to force Stourbridge onto the defensive and clear the time the home attack carried more threat.

After some anxious moments in and around the Glassboys box, the hosts should have pulled a goal back in the 52nd minute after Sam Smith blotted an otherwise typically solid display when he dawdled on the ball and allowed himself to be closed down by the sprinting Barcelos who burst through on the visitors' goal.

Archer's arrows hit home to hurt

HALESOWEN 1 CHESHAM 4
LEON ARCHER was the scourge of Halesowen, striking a hat-trick to give promotion-chasing Chesham a 4-1 win.

The Yeltz, who visit Chesham for a return fixture next week, handed debuts to Peter Folkes and Jem Mills, writes David Johnson.

Archer took just 45 seconds

to put the visitors in the driving seat when he headed home a right-wing cross from Paul Robinson.

The Generals bossed the early play with influential Steve Wales striking across goal in the 15th minute.

Prolific Archer doubled Chesham's lead with his second headed goal in the 31st minute, perfectly timing his run to meet another Robinson

centre. Just before the interval Curtis went close for the hosts when his curling 25-yard shot was tipped away for a corner by goalkeeper Shane Gore.

Consolation

Gareth Davies went closer still for Halesowen when he rattled the crossbar with another long range shot in the 57th minute, and Curtis fired

across goal five minutes later.

The start of the second period was largely uneventful until Chesham turned up the heat again to claim a further two goals.

Archer completed his hat-trick by slotting into an empty net after a mistake from Skidmore left Flower stranded.

Justin Nisbett grabbed what would be a mere consolation for Halesowen 90

seconds later by converting a loose ball after substitute Jemiah Richards pressurised goalkeeper Gore.

But Wales made it 4-1 for Chesham in the 75th minute with a superb top corner finish from the edge of the penalty area.

Steve Obeng's flying header then hit the post but Chesham spared the Yeltz any further embarrassment.

RICHARDS SEES RED IN DEFEAT

Guns spiked as Peel power in seven

ROB Peel FC made sure **Young Guns** stay deep in trouble in the Brierley Hill Premier division as **Dan Cowell** led them home to a 7-0 victory.

In division one Pass Masters are all but assured of the second promotion spot and beat Clinically Insane 3-0.

Dudley Lions roared home 22-0 this week in the Wolverhampton Monday 6 a side league, crushing Sparkys R Us FC, while Pink Panthers have four points from four games after they saw off Hardly Athletic 3-1.

The Legends preserved top spot on the Wolverhampton Tuesday league - just. They beat Beer Bellies 8-7 in a ding-dong battle which saw James Dickinson score five of the winning sides goals.

Midlands All Stars humbled Only Here For The Beer 8-3.



Young Guns stay in deep trouble

Late strike decides tie

DUDLEY TOWN 4 WOLVERHAMPTON SPORTS 3

CROATIAN striker Deniz Bala was the hero as Dudley Town edged out rock-bottom Wolverhampton Sporting Community in a thriller at The Dell Stadium.

Bala struck the winner with five minutes to go - his second goal of the game - as the Robins moved six points clear of the relegation zone, writes Chris Davis.

Dudley were able to call on the services of Joe O'Neil following a holiday, while Danny Bell returned from an ankle injury.

The Robins flew out of the traps and should have been in the lead after six minutes.

A pinpoint pass from Bell found Ben Store, but he could only fire the ball straight at Wolves goalkeeper Dan Watson.

Store quickly made amends for his lapse four minutes later by

freeing Matt Hearsey to chip Watson for his first goal in Dudley colours.

There were further chances to extend the lead for the hosts, with Bell, Store and Bala all going close.

But the visitors grew in confidence and equalised through Daniel Lloyd who looped a header over Matt Rodgers on the half hour mark.

Basement

Wolves could have gone ahead on the stroke of half time, but Bowen's looping free-kick smashed against the top of Rodgers' crossbar.

On 62 minutes the league's basement dwellers shocked the Robins by taking the lead when Ryan Jones scored with a fine shot from the right-hand side.

Dudley regrouped and just

four minutes later levelled the scores when Bala broke free of the Wolves defence to place the ball coolly under substitute keeper Ben Moore.

It appeared that the hosts had the game in the bag after 72 minutes when Danny Bell placed home his first Robins goal since his transfer from Bustleholme.

With new signing Ben Stretton pulling the strings in midfield Dudley looked pretty comfortable, but a contested free-kick, smashed home by Alex Hyde, changed the run of the game and levelled things up at three apiece.

With just five minutes remaining, substitute Nick Jones was allowed space to back-heel Bala through on goal and the Croatian target man scored his second goal of the game for a dramatic late winner.

TEN-MAN Halesowen were denied victory after a largely unconvincing Chippenhams took the points with two second half goals, *writes David Johnson.*

After a slow start to the evening, Alan Griffin headed the ball onto Sam Allison but his fierce shot was beaten away by debut home goalkeeper Louis Connor.

Halesowen's Justin Nisbett looked lively in the first period and his cross was turned behind for a corner by Nathan Rudge, with the resulting corner cleared from under the crossbar.

The Yeltz took a surprise 21st minute lead when Michael McGrath's corner was helped on by Chris Godwin and Andre Hinds provided the final touch for his first Halesowen goal.

Crossed

Nisbett caused further danger with a 29th minute cross and then skipped several challenges only to see his final weak shot collected by visiting goalkeeper Chris Snoddy.

Towards the end of a disappointing first half for the visitors, Allison crossed for Griffin to nod just wide.

Halesowen ended an encouraging half with towering Jemiah Richards heading just wide.

Meetings between the two teams have a long history of incidents and the game exploded into life in the 64th minute.

Peter Folkes' late foul on Lye resulted in a yellow card and centre-

HALESOWEN 1 CHIPPENHAM 2

forward Richards was shown a straight red card for retaliating in the ensuing melee.

Lewis Powell's wide angle shot was cleared off the line but Chippenhams soon equalised against Halesowen's 10 men.

Griffin headed on James Guthrie's corner for Powell to nod home from close range in the 69th minute.

The Bluebirds struck again seven minutes later when Luke Gullick glanced home a header from Guthrie's right-wing corner.

However, Chippenhams were then also reduced to 10 men.

Claim

Tindle received a straight red card for his challenge on substitute Mark Smith, who had only arrived on the pitch a couple of minutes earlier.

The visitors saw out the game to claim all three points, although a last minute free kick from McGrath was saved by Snoddy.

The visiting goalkeeper then escaped again in injury time after spilling another McGrath set piece.

Preview treat for club fans

DUDLEY Heathens riders have been handed the opportunity to put in some much-needed pre-season laps at Wolverhampton's pre-season practice next week.

And that means the former Cradley club and their team of youngsters will be rubbing shoulders with the likes of Grand Prix star Freddie Lindgren, GB World Cup ace Tai Woffinden and Wolves legend Peter Karlsson on Tuesday, March 16. Practice starts at 6pm and Heathens riders are likely to feature from 7pm.

All seven Heathens riders have been invited to take part and a hefty following of fans from the Dudley/Cradley area are sure to make the short trip to see their favourites in action.

Opportunity

Dudley will again be using Monmore Green as their home track for the new season as they continue their search for a new venue closer to their former Dudley Wood home.

Team manager Will Pottinger said: "This is a great opportunity for my riders to get some practice in on their adopted home track. All the boys are up for the new season and we can't wait to get the bikes on the track and get racing."

It's good timing for us with our first meeting against the USA Tourists coming up on Tuesday, April 12."

Elijah sets gold mark

CHARLESWORTH Martial Arts School returned from the British Championships in Nottingham with an impressive medal haul.

World and European champion Elijah Everall, aged 12, was the star man for the Old Hill-based club, winning gold medals in separate weight categories.

He beat the World Association of Kicking Organisations (WAKO) world champion in the first round and then saw off three other opponents to become the -47kg British champion.

He also went into the -52kg section and in the final he beat yet another world champion. Coach Jason Charlesworth said: "I believe Elijah has the world at his feet."

Other successes included Tara Billingham, who kept up her impressive form by gaining two golds in the under-18 black belt cadet girls and the ladies +75kg black belt section.

Kyran Cox, 17, added a gold medal in the -79kg cadet boys.

Weston Bogle, 14, was in possibly of the toughest sections of the day and picked up a bronze medal, while 13-year-old Holly O'Conner, from Gloucester, was pipped at the death in her first round fight.

Another to miss out on a medal was Jodie Lee, who fought well on her competitive debut.

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